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The Methodist Pulpit

The Captain of Our Faith

Wallace Mac Mullen

The Captain of Our Faith

By

REV. WALLACE MACMULLEN, D. D.
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To Laura,

Wife, Comrade, and Inspiration

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I.

THE CAPTAIN OF OUR FAITH

"Looking unto Jesus, the Captain of our faith."—Heb. xii, 2.

THE margin of the revision will give this reading "Captain" in place of "Author." Christianity has its roots in a history. Out of the historical facts in which it is rooted there comes a system of truth often called "the faith," and a personal life which is distinctively a life of faith. The word "faith" in the text may be interpreted in both these ways: first, as belief in the Word or truth of God; second, as practical confidence in the love of God. In the preceding chapter in which the apostle recites the historical triumphs of faith, both these aspects of it may be constantly found. In the heroes of the Church in Israel, these elements mingle: acceptance of the Word of God, confidence in the life of God. In these ways, then, we will look at faith—

as belief and as trust—and find Jesus our Captain in both.

I. OUR CAPTAIN AS COMMANDER.

1. *In matters of belief.* If, like skeptical Pilate, but with a better, a more earnest spirit, our query is, "What is Truth?" Christ's answer is, "I am the Truth." And that description of Himself is His claim of dominion over man's intellect. He identifies Himself with the eternal reality of things. Truth is the authority to which all loyal minds do homage. Christ by His Spirit is to rule over all the movements of man's mind. Christ in His teachings has uttered the final words beyond which, in the realms in which He chose to move, man's mind can not go. His solemn "verilies" are the foundation stones on which our beliefs must rest; the corner stones from which our creeds must take their lines. He insisted on His listeners' assent to His teaching. Loyalty to Him included faith in His words. He appealed to His works as evidence of the truth of His words. The objectors to His teaching had seen His miraculous works, and if His words awaken no response in their dead hearts, if His claims are not instantly indorsed, as they should be, by their own innermost lives, He will

call in the evidence of their senses. "Believe Me for the very works' sake." "The works' sake:" not because of their mighty power—for power may be employed for evil ends—but because of their mighty love. The mercy of my deeds cries aloud for a recognition of the truth of my words. That 's one appeal of Christ. He bids them recognize the fact that in Him "mercy and truth are met together." Then He appealed to the testimony of His own consciousness and asserted its truth. "Though I speak of Myself, yet My testimony is true." The Pharisees objected to His testimony concerning Himself on the accepted ground that one's witness to one's self can not be taken as reliable. But He broke away from the teaching of that low human principle that self-estimate is worthless, a principle which is true only because and only in the measure that ignorance or falsehood holds the measuring line, and insisted that, although He bore witness to Himself, yet His witness was true; for no ignorance darkened His perfect self-knowledge, and no deceit stained His lips. He knew Himself, and spoke truly out of His perfect knowledge.

For both of these reasons, to-day as then, Christ's words are to command our beliefs. His works in

the world, mightier than any His Judean hearers had known—works of holy ministry, works of enlightening truth; works of subduing, transforming grace; the works of the centuries, the works of to-day; the works in all the world, the works in our own hearts—the works are tributes to the Word. And through them the voice of Christ speaks, "Believe Me for the works' sake. They are the signs of My rank. These trophies of My power in the fields of grace establish My rights in the fields of truth. Believe Me." And we do. Some of His words need no credentials. Our souls respond to them. Our experiences establish them. But if there are words which we can not verify—words, the whole meaning of which hide away in profound mystery; words which reach out into the untried future; words which deal with the nature and will of the eternal God—then His appeal is this: "Though My word is unsupported by your experience; though you can not test its truth; though I simply speak of Myself and can offer no evidence save the statements of My own consciousness, believe Me." And we will. "We will, Master, simply because the word is Thine." Glad we are when the life of our soul tells us that His sweet words are true; sure we are that those words are

true, even though we can not prove their truth, because He spoke them, and that some day, when we grow large enough, our glorious experiences will register the meanings and testify to the truth of the great words which now stretch away beyond our grasp.

There are certain great teachings of Christ which ought to master us; truths to which the great Captain of our faith commands us to bow; great, prominent spiritual landmarks, out of sight of which we are never to wander. We may explore with all freedom within the limits which they mark, but they are boundaries from which we must not escape. They are the truths concerning God's being, concerning man's need, concerning man's future. We will never let go what Christ has taught us about God. God may become, to our adoring thought, more and more majestic as the universe which we study becomes vaster; our conceptions of Him may become burdened with an unspeakable, solemn, oppressive grandeur as science pushes its inquiries reverently out into the silent mysteries of creation. It may be true, it will be truer, that God is unknowable in the unthinkable measures of His being, but we will never, never wander from the truth that God is Christ-like. Christ has declared God's

conscience and heart in final terms, and these are the facts of supreme worth to us. He denounced in scathing terms those who treasured their sins; He had for hypocrites fierce, blighting invective; He bravely prophesied the hell which unforsaken sin would lead to; yet He wept over the sinners He rebuked, He sought the company of the outcast, He died for sinners. And both the moral sternness and the tender love are pictures of God. God is a consuming fire, the perpetual condemnation of sin in me, the explanation of my conscience, the voice that speaks in all the moral thunders which conscience rolls through my soul. But He is also my Father, grieving over the wreck which sin has wrought in His child, forgiving the foul offense which sin has been against Him, taking the sin-stained soul into His own hands that He may wipe away its stains. God as Holy Father—the Captain of our faith commands us to believe that truth. Do we?

He taught that the supreme need of man's life was salvation from sin. When the palsied man was before Him for healing, He spoke first to the needy soul: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He came to call sinners to repentance. He shed His blood for the remission of sins. Our supreme need is

spiritual. The great Captain of our faith bids us obey the ordering of that truth. Do we? Do we fight sin as earnestly as we fight ignorance or poverty? Do we long after and strain after holiness as we do after information or money?

He taught that this life is but a segment of life; that the grave does not bound it; that beyond that dark, dread experience there are solemn realities of joy or suffering; that sin persisted in will bring the soul into tormenting anguish. He drew somber pictures of the intolerable pain and unutterable loss awaiting the soul which will not be separated from its sin. And the words were loving—love's prophecies of sin's results. He spoke radiant words of a Father's house and waiting mansions, and gave promises of Paradise and blessedness. And He commands our acceptance of this truth of the immortal life, that sin's certain harvest may be our sufficient warning, that our glorious destiny may robe us now with dignity, that already for us earth may be crammed with heaven and every common experience be on fire with God.

2. *In matters of trust.* This is the sweet, tender meaning of faith—trust in a person. It is not the speech of the intellect, but the speech of the heart. It is not born of logic, but of suffering need and

assuring love. And He is Captain of our faith in this aspect of it. He commands our trust. To accept the truth of His teaching is well; to accept the love of His heart is better. He is more than a philosopher; He is a Savior. In addition to His truth He has strength and tenderness. While He says to restless, darkened minds, "Believe My words," He also says to sorrowing, sinning souls, "Believe in My purpose and power; trust your life to Me." To the sinking Peter, "Wherefore didst thou doubt?" To the pleading sufferer, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" To the grieving disciples, "Believe also in Me." One of the main pleas of His life was for trust. Herein was the bitter grief of His life—the distrust of those He loved. It is this personal note which distinguishes His ministry. "Come unto Me for rest." "I am the door," ever swinging to give entrance to the fold, ever strong to shut out the enemy. "I am the Good Shepherd," leading with watchful care My helpless flock, protecting them even with My own life. My offered life is your ransom, My broken body your food, My flowing blood the fountain for the cleansing of your sin. Rest in Me. Always He commands our trust. Allegiance to His words involves loyalty to Him. To be enlightened by

His truth is precious; to be saved and supported forever and forever by His grace is glorious. And wherefore should we not trust Him? If His mighty works and clear, unsullied soul are reasons enough for the acceptance of His teaching, are not the ministering hands, the tearful eyes, the weary feet, the days of mercy and the nights of prayer, the hunger and the homelessness, the pierced hands and thorn-crowned head and breaking heart, proofs enough of His purpose? Has He not a right to command our trust? Are not those stripes with which His life is covered the signs of His Captaincy? Do they not make Him supreme among all the forces of love?

II. OUR CAPTAIN AS LEADER.

Leader in the sense of One who has Himself passed through the battles into which He leads; One who in Himself is the pledge of triumph and the suggestion of the method by which it comes. He has come from the ranks. He is first among many brethren. His own human experiences qualify Him to lead the souls intrusted to Him. So here, beyond the idea of authority, we get the idea of example. One of the prominent meanings of the original word here is "Pattern." He is the Pattern

of our faith. Our faith is not only to be under His control, but to be like His in kind.

1. *In belief.* He repudiated tradition. He went to the wells of truth for Himself. He refused for a minute to recognize in the Rabbinical rubbish of the years, intended for the defense and application of the law, any authority whatever. "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." But for the truth itself, however ancient, He had the most profound reverence. "I came not to destroy the law." "Not one jot or tittle of it shall pass away." But while He revered and fulfilled old truth, He brought forth new truth. He was more than a commentator, He was a revealer. "I say unto you" was the formula introducing His teaching. Though the old enriched Him, it did not confine Him. And, then, note His allegiance to truth. Was not His life always the illustration of His words? Was it not the voluntary fulfillment of earlier truth? Did not His example summarize His teachings? When He taught God as loving Father, did not His sacrifice show that the truth had taken Him captive? When He emphasized the supreme need of spiritual beauty in human life, did not His own stainless purity show that the truth of holiness ruled His soul? Take these suggestions,

then, for belief: independence, reverence, allegiance. Where shall we go for the life-giving draughts of the truth? To the creeds of the councils? No; but to the Word of the Lord and to the life we have received from Him. Grant that the builders of the creeds were wise and for the most part spiritual, are we then to put their theological structures on a par with the temple of truth itself? Are the grace, the symmetry, the untold treasures of this matchless Scripture structure which the Spirit of God has been building through the centuries, reproduced within the bare, logical walls which were put up in a few weeks or months? Is the certifying, revealing, satisfying life of God in the soul a treasure of which past ages had a monopoly? Not so. We rightly deny the authority of the creeds in so far as that authority is merely ecclesiastical. We yield to their authority in so far as they contain truth, for truth is always binding. Homage in abundance for any truth they yield, but no unworthy, because paralyzing, homage for the age of the creed or the dignity of its authors. Opinions are to be our teachers, not our jailers.

But while we learn from the great Captain of our faith our rightful independence, we must not forget our reverence. To look for truth reverently

is to be Christ-like in our search. To be independent does not mean to be flippant. Yet too much flippancy is bound up with so-called independence. If the creeds are not our prisons, neither are they the butts for our ridicule. Do not dare make a laughing-stock of that which has been true for multitudes. He who sneers at the faith of his mother is a coward and a traitor to truth. He who jokes about beliefs for which men have died is a pigmy. Dismiss reverence in your search for truth, and you are doomed to darkness. If you do not believe what once you did believe, never bring out the vanished belief for sneer or laugh. Treat it as you would the sacred dust of a loved one.

Then, above all things, be loyal to your beliefs. Learn that from the great Pattern of our faith. Let your beliefs be full of fiber. Never mind the negatives. Do n't advertise the things you do n't believe. People do not care about your doubts. They have enough of their own. Be positive. Speak the things which are true to you. Then be true to your truth. Let your life be the voice that speaks your creed. Those parts of our creeds which are illustrated in our lives are the valuable parts; such illustration is possible, for life is molded by belief if the belief is yielded to. Yet some ignorantly say, "It makes

no difference what one believes if only one lives right." As though life did not flow out of belief! As though the real were not born of the ideal! The other thing is true—that beliefs are built out of experience; but this also is true—that life is shaped by belief. Under the Master's leadership let us search for the truth bravely and persistently, and when we find it let us be true enough to greet it reverently and swear allegiance to its authority, and we shall be led by it into the perfect liberty of the children of God.

2. *In trust.* Here again Jesus is our Pattern. He called men to trust Him, and at the same time identified Himself with God, and so fastened man's trust to its only sure Divine anchorage. And while urging trust as a necessary force in man's life, He was not recommending a force which was absent from His own life. He, too, walked by faith. He was perfectly human. We need not fear to insist upon that. He acknowledged dependence as we must. He trusted and was delivered as we may be. At the very opening of His ministry He adopted trust as His method for life. "Command these stones to become bread," said the tempter, and though hunger weakened Him, He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that pro-

ceedeth out of the mouth of God." It was the choice of dependence, the speech of trust. When the darkness of the Garden shadowed Him, and its agony shook His soul, and He cowered beneath the burden of redemptive woe, and shrank back from the cup which became more bitter as its dregs were reached, He said, "The cup which My Father hath given Me to drink, shall I not drink it?" "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." It is the choice of the Father's plan for His life. It is the triumph of trust. On the cross, when the sun is filling His wounds with fire, and every nerve is a torturing scourge, and the heavens grow black, and His calm spirit is swept by the awful storm of His accepted suffering, and His anguished, darkened eyes could not see the Father's face, and He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He said at last, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit." It is the glorious victory of trust. Truly He is the Pattern of our trust. And if our trust is modeled after His, then for the body's care we will depend upon our Father, and He who feeds the birds and paints the lilies and numbers the hairs of our heads will honor our trust. For all the life's support and development we will rest on Him, confident that He knoweth the things we have need of. We will

seek and trust God's plan for our lives, and if in the plan's development some bitter cups may be pressed to our lips, and the wondering questions arise, and in our anguish we cry, "If it be possible let this cup pass," yet our trust will lead us into the peace of His accepted will. And when the end comes, and the world and friends recede, faith will furnish wings to the timid spirit, and we will mount into life singing, "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

Captain of our faith! His rule is full of mercy. His leadership is full of inspiration. He is bringing His armies to the glory where He Himself has gone. Let Him choose the way. Some day we will

> "Wonder at the beauteous hours,
> The slow result of winter showers,"

when we

> "With joy upon our heads arise,
> And meet our Captain in the skies."

II.

EAGLES' WINGS AND PATIENT FEET.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall put forth wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."—Isa. xl, 31.

THE text suggests to us:

I. THE SOUL'S ATTITUDE.

1. *In the dark.* When Israed by the route taken in the escape from Egypt, marched into what proved a *cul de sac,* a blind alley, the sea before, the heights flanking them, the Egyptian squadrons behind them, there was but one resource. Neither their frenzied fear, nor their wise energy, not the inventive genius of their leader, could avail to rescue them. They must stand still and see God work. "Stand still and see the salvation of thy God," was the order of Moses. When Cromwell was at Dunbar, with the opposing Scottish army in a practically unassailable position, and his own soldiers sick and starving, he

had resolved on the retreat of his troops, but in the dusk of the evening he saw signs of movement in the Scottish camp. The Scottish force was apparently leaving their vantage ground and coming to the lower English level. Cromwell flung his whole force upon the enemy and scattered them. As the sun rose, Cromwell exclaimed: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; like as the mist vanisheth, so shalt thou drive them away." It seemed to the great leader the working of God, and the victory he received as God's gift. A father, as reported in the *Advocate*, said: "I was trying to save a wayward son. I had sought Divine grace, exhausted every means, and prayers, tears, appeals were all in vain. Hope and despair alternated; and yet I could not give him up. There was nothing vicious about him. He was loving and tender-hearted. It was the old story: he was a victim, and realized it. One Saturday night I found him only to lose him. It was midnight, and I sat in my office, weary and faint. I had done my best. My heart was broken. My aching eyes fell upon these words:

'Lie down and sleep,
Leave it with God to keep
This sorrow which is part
Now of thy heart.

When thou dost wake,
If still 't is thine to take,
Utter no wild complaint;
Work waits thy hands;
If thou should'st faint,
God understands.'

I said, 'I will.' I went home and slept in peace. The next morning the way was opened, and from that bright Sabbath morning, through the abounding goodness of God, my boy was rescued and saved."

It is this attitude the text portrays. It is the retreat into God; the waiting for Him. It was the necessary position for Israel to take in exile. There were no signs, in events, that their deliverance was at hand. Not their experience, but their faith was their refuge. On every hand were the evidences of the greatness and promises of the endurance of the mighty state which held them in easy control. Still, they had reminders of God about them and within them. Nature, mightier than the cities of men, declared to them the supreme power of the Supreme God. Their own history bade them not forget His interest in them, His gracious designs and His delivering power. Our resources are like theirs. Wait for God. His power in nature, His presence in life, are guarantees of His help. If

because He is strong, not a star faileth, be sure that the power which is not absent from any force in nature is the power of the Father; power which is controlled and directed by love.

2. *In the daylight toil.* We do not need catastrophe to make plain the availability of God. At the beginning of the last century, geology held that nature had made her progress by a series of catastrophies. But it became clear that such things were quite unnecessary to account for the facts which we see. And the new geology sees that great natural changes are brought about by existing forces. We do not now, if we are truly reverent, think of God as filling the gaps in nature's processes, but as present in them all. But sometimes in our theories of life we limit God to the old spasmodic method. He interferes in emergencies, but is not present in our daily toil. This is the practical atheism of which the multitudes are guilty. When Washington, with his ragged, hungry, shivering army is waiting the winter out at Valley Forge, and is found on his knees asking help of God; when Lincoln, "the kindly, brave, far-seeing man," before Gettysburg, according to General Sickles, was closeted with God and issued from his communion sure of victory; when Havelock, marching to relieve Lucknow, was

up an hour before the camp was astir each morning to confer with God as to his campaign, and listen to Him in the open Word and upon his knees; when Jesus, rising a great while before day, went into desert places to talk with the Father, and up to mountain summits to spend the night in prayer; in all these cases we can feel that such world leaders, carrying such vast burdens, were entirely rational in waiting upon God. In them it was not a sign of weakness, but proof of insight into the source of power. But if the exceptional men in striking crises need such help, are ordinary men in life's regular business free from the need of it? Is God necessary in the world's emergencies, and unnecessary in its daily processes? Ah, the catastrophe theory still operates. When sorrow comes, or other disaster, and the currents of life run sluggishly or threaten to stop, God is resorted to. He serves as a stimulus when the fires of life burn low. He interferes to take us safely over the break in experience until we can get along with Him. Is that our theory or our practice? One can not help wondering at the shameful discourtesy of it, and the suicidal irrationality of it. Israel not only had need to wait for Him in the darkness of Babylon, but in the slow and weary march over the deserts to distant Zion, and in all the discouraging, weary-

ing work of rebuilding the structure of their national life when Zion was reached. For slow development, as well as for dramatic deliverance, they must wait on Him. And that is true about us all. Their movement from Babylon and their reinstatement in distant Jerusalem, experiences to which they were led to look by this prophecy, were political and religious—a restored city and a restored Temple. And from neither part of the process could God take His departure.

Ah, how we need to wait for Him day by day! We have a tendency to become automatic in life's work; daily duty is discharged in mechanical fashion. Inspirations in it are not looked for. And in our religious work the same is true. That is, the work which has a religious appearance. What a wealth of benevolent toil is poured out upon the needy! But we have not understood the meanings of such toil if it has seemed a substitute for devotional life, or a supplement to it. Sometimes when we set out to explain why the devotional life in our Churches is less eager and enthusiastic than formerly, we offer as part of the explanation the fact that we have so many humanitarian agencies at work to-day. Our people are so busy in so many other ways that were previously uncommon. But this is the mistake of substituting

philanthropy for religion. Our humanitarian work is to be the expression of our devotional life. Philanthropy, if it be complete and not partial, has its inspiration and its refuge in religion. Our service to man will not be complete and will not be patient, if we do not wait upon God. We offer instruction, entertainment, culture, to needy lives. How can we make such offers in faith or courage if God is not breaking in upon our souls with promises and power? And how can we watch such souls growing in knowledge or in practical ability without longing to have them know God? Our waiting upon God is not respite from our toil, but an essential part of it; and is to be regarded as a part of our equipment for it. We will not strain the language here very much if we say, "Wait upon God as courtiers do before a king, as servants do before a master." We are to come back from the tasks into His presence to render our reports and receive new strength.

II. THE PROMISED STRENGTH.

1. *Its achievements.* "They shall put forth wings as eagles." Eagle flights are among the things God plans for those who trust Him. Imagine the circumstances when Cyrus proclaimed freedom

to the captive Jews. Multitudes of the captives were quite content with their new home; for some, Jerusalem was but a name, for others a dim memory. But with those who still waited for Jehovah, there was a perpetual longing and a pleading faith, and we can fancy the rapture which thrilled them when their emancipation proclamation was issued. The home land, the holy city, the sacred temple, filled their dreams. How glad they were! A new transfiguring knowledge of the grace of God has come to them. He has decided at last that their warfare is accomplished.

> "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,
> We were like unto them that dream.
> Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
> And our tongue with singing:
> Then said they among the nations,
> The Lord had done great things for them.
> The Lord hath done great things for us;
> Whereof we are glad."

Their souls were full of song, their eyes were flashing with the glory of the prospect, their days were restless with enthusiastic preparation.

Soaring, ecstatic experiences may not be the highest proof of religious power, but they are among its genuine notes. It is not for us to say that in primitive days such ecstasies were in place, but not

to-day. Of course, there has been a growth in self-control. We need not look for, nor desire, the old physical excitements, but heart rapture is not an ancient relic, or should not be. The ethical revivals which are frequently prophesied in which the various departments of human life will become annexed provinces of the King will be welcome, but to have them thorough or permanent, let them be based in heart revivals in which God's delivering will is declared and His perfect love shed abroad. We may still have eagle flights of joy when we wait for God. We can rejoice with these delivered captives in ancient Babylon, whose ears were full of the music of breaking fetters. Others, too, have soared till they could seem to

> "Touch the heavenly strings
> And vie with Gabriel while he sings
> In notes almost divine."

Beecher records an experience in which there rose up in him "such a sense of God's taking care of those who put their trust in Him, that for an hour all the world was crystalline, the heavens were lucid, and I sprang to my feet and began to cry and laugh." To be sure, there is a joyousness that comes from health and healthy-mindedness, but it can not compare with religious ecstasy. Browning

suggests a contrast of the two kinds and sources of joy in "Saul." In one place, David sings;

"O, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
Of a plunge in a pool's living water.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!"

But that joy of the minstrel before the melancholy king did not compare with the rapture which was his after the full revelation of God's suffering love has broken upon him. He declares he knew not how he found his way home, there were witnesses with him on every side, he broke through them,

"As a runner beset by the populace famished for news."

"The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge."

But God supported him, God suppressed all the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, "till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest." Many a soul knows this almost startling change that comes over nature when it has been made glad by the truth and the presence of God.

Emotionalism we have too highly emphasized possibly. Perhaps rather it is true that we have had in mind too much one type of experience as the standard to which all must conform. We have forgotten the various structures of souls, and that certain forms of emotional experience are impossible to some by the very laws of their life. But the emotional is a permanent element in human nature. It is irrational to say we may look for the transports of human love, the fine flashing joys which come from sweet human intercourse, but must not dream of such results in connection with God. This Bible is a record of human experience. Recall its salient figures, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, David, Hosea, Paul. And how much of the revelation which clusters around these names has its essence in transforming experience. By which we do not mean a dry chronicle of events in their lives, nor a catalogue of their opinions, nor a record of their actions, but vision, glory, rapture, joyous conviction about God. And is the constitution of man utterly changed? How did such raptures come then? From brooding upon God's truth, from the loving, reverent gaze upon His work, from visitations of His Spirit. And the materials are still ours, His truth, His power, His grace, His Son, His Spirit. And when the splendor of these breaks

in upon us, and the soul spreads its wings for eagle flights, the glory is not a bit of hysterics, not a delusion, but a valid spiritual enthusiasm.

But these are not the only achievements of the promised power. "They shall run and not be weary." They are to have vigor to push the preparations for the desert journey. Rapture must find its outlet in toil. And after the start has been actually made, and eagerly the delivered captives have left mighty Babylon and have crossed the flat Chaldean plains, there is the desert to be crossed. Glad songs, ecstatic laughter, will not be sufficient. They must walk all the weary way without fainting. As vigorously they pushed over the plains till they reached the desert's edge, and then each day made ready for the march over desert wastes, and patiently, steadily drew near to distant Zion, were not the vigor and the patience as certainly the strength of God as the song and the rapture? Our flashing enthusiasms are not more certainly the gifts of God upon whom we wait than the vigorous energy with which we push our enterprises, or the patience with which we endure our daily lot.

2. *Its development.* We will not be far wrong if we find here an order of development. At first glance, this looks like an anti-climax. From eagle-

flights to weary walking, is not that a descent? Does it mean that a religious life is at first a thing of joy and glory, but that it becomes feeble, and finally degenerates into a kind of dogged moral persistency? As has been suggested, some cynically find here a portrait of religious history. In the youth of the race, when man's mind was juvenile, and the earth and its mysteries were fresh and new, it was easy for old men to dream beautiful dreams and young men to see entrancing visions. Religion was then in its golden age. But it is an old story now. The glory and the freshness of it have passed away. Souls do not soar any more as they did in the eagle days of the religious instinct; they just trudge along painfully at the bidding of an old religious habit. Religion is a poor, limping ceremonial or a juiceless creed. "The soul's east window of divine surprise" has been obscured "with painted saints and paraphrase of God." But the text is true to life, and we are to find in it not degeneration, but fulfillment of the religious life. To give power for great achievement, and courage for weary journeys, is greater triumph than kindling rapture, however blessed that may be. Most of us

> "Can not draw habitual breath,
> In the thin air of life's supremer heights;
> We can not make each meal a sacrament."

Let us be glad, then, that we may be helped to run on its ordinary levels without weariness, and to walk even its steep slopes without fainting. Indeed we will show the genuineness of our visions and raptures by the way in which we act in the toil and wear of daily duty. Paul had visions unspeakable, but also service unwearied. He had wonderful prospects of a transcendent ministry, and then walked patiently through the stocks and stones and prisons of his daily experience. Was he less religious in his heroic endurance than when he was caught up into the third heaven? Was it not true, rather, that his heroism proved the reality of the visions? Abt Vogler had his inspiration, caught the music of the ineffable name, climbed heavenly summits of perfect sound, and then rolled into the deep, and at last found his resting-place on the C-major of common life. And if we find music substantial and steady in common things, we are enjoying religious triumph. Jesus confers with exalted prophets, was ministered to by angels, was "separate from sinners and higher than the heavens," had communion with God. And yet every day He healed the sick and forgave sins and preached the gospel of the kingdom. Was He less Divine at Jacob's well with the sinful woman than on the Mount of Transfig-

uration in the shining glory? Ah! the test of a religion is not in a crisis merely, but in steady, ordinary life. Lofty moods, high ideals, entrancing visions, are quite possible and very blessed, but we must come to the test of the commonplace. It is in our steady reliance, in the daily renewal of strength, in faith which will not fail, though often it trembles, in hope which will not die, in tasks which we will not forsake, even though they tire us, in these that we get best acquainted with God, and able to find Him in the common materials of daily existence.

To all alike—to the seer of the ideal—who, leaving this actual discouraging world, retreats into the shelter of beautiful thoughts; to the energetic toiler who, with fresh vigor, daily grapples manfully his life task, and tries to change the deformed actual into the ideal; to the patient souls who live peaceably with the commonplace, and strain the ear to hear its music, and the eye to see its beauty,—to all alike God comes with renewed strength. Let those who see, and those who toil, and those who walk with patience, all wait upon God.

III.

"LIGHT AND LIFE."

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men."
—John i, 4.

I. The Light's Source.

1. *A truth of history.* The meaning of life may be wrapped in mystery; its movement is unmistakable. It stirs, throbs, grows. It is a thing of power. In the highest life the power is self-directed. It has purpose. "In Him was life," and the life had high function and gracious purpose. It was to be "the Light of men." By it men were to be illuminated, warmed, beautified. Men were to know of the fact and measure of His life by its bright shining. The life could be known only by means of its own radiance. There are three terms in human thought: God, man, the world. Three dark provinces to be explored: the nature and will of the Eternal, the nature and need of the soul, the meaning and destiny of the universe. Our theologies, philosophies,

and sciences work on these materials. God, that name which should chime musically with the throbs of the resting heart, and sound confidently from the lips of need, and weave a spell of peace around restless lives, and make true and obedient wayward feet, was a word of doubtful value until Jesus came. It was a common name, with a family rather than an individual significance. There were many gods whose jurisdiction was local and whose power was limited. In character they were nearly always despotic, often malignant, frequently indifferent. Or to more thoughtful races God was a symbol rather than a life, representing unknown ultimate forces. In Jewish theology God was imperfectly set forth. In the early life of the nation He was their national patron with a cruel temper. In their later and truer thought He was severely righteous and beautifully tender, but on the whole bounded in His plans and dependent in them on Jewish destiny. And now the dear life of the Christ, mighty, holy, loving, with its impartial tenderness and unwearied toil, has made radiant the Holy Fatherhood of God.

And how He has illuminated our own life! Our researches are of small avail, almost trivial. What can probe and scalpel and crucible tell us of life's real meaning and outcome? "Life's bases rest be-

yond the probe of chemic test." That 's a spiritual as well as a physical truth. Such study, if supplemented by nothing else, is like determining the nature of a seed by an analysis of the "fecula," the soft matter within the husk of the seed, which is dependent for its usefulness and its future upon the elusive germ of the seed. Our life, not its body home, not its limping faculties, not its many-colored environment, but in its invisible, independent, individual, indestructible germ—what is it? The "I," not its tools, not its clothes, not its homes, but its qualities, its power, its destiny. What is our ancestry? His brotherhood declares our sonship to God. What do we need? He has solemnly declared. What shall we be? He has shown us in Himself. How may we climb? He has offered His life, love, power. Our ancestry and our destiny are both ablaze with the splendor of His revelation. And the history which stretches between our original recognition of our sonship and its ultimate development, darkened and disturbed perhaps with clouds and storms and falls, may be made luminous and triumphant by His own glorious grace.

And this universe? "We lift our torch of reason in this dusky cave of life" and are alarmed and puzzled by the tumultuous world. But there is a place

of confidence. We may feel that the "universe is full of love as well as of inexorable sternness and veracity." We may know that "all 's love yet all 's law."

"Doubt no longer that the Highest is the wisest and the best,
Let not all that saddens Nature blight thy hope or break thy rest,
Quail not at the fiery mountain, at the shipwreck, or the rolling
Thunder, or the rending earthquake, or the famine or the pest!"

Our assurance is in Jesus. We do not ask Him, "How," in reference to the material system. That is a scientific query, and science attempts its answer. But we ask Him, "Why" and "Whither," and while He does not disclose the measure of the ultimate purpose, He does assure us of its character when He reveals the character of its Ruler. In all the wild tumult of jarring forces love is served and out of them all peace will come. "This world 's no blot for us nor blank; it means intensely and it means good."

2. *A law of illumination.* "The Life is the Light." Light has a gracious ministry. It is not merely an interesting subject in the study of optics. It does open fascinating fields of research. It offers many treasures of attractive truth. Unraveled by the prism, its constituent colors prove not only cu-

rious but useful. The comparison of them with the color effects of known substances helps us to determine the constitution of the blazing runs of the illimitable spaces. Or we catch the light in our lenses and make it paint our portraits. But while prism and spectrum and camera are very useful, opening up new lines of ministry for the lovely light, they are not at all necessary to its most immediate and most important ministry. Not the unraveled light, not the focused and deflected light, but just the clear white, untwisted, blessed light, showering upon us its free, unhampered splendors—this is our treasure. Not primarily to make us know the anatomy of worlds, not to be coaxed by our glasses and our chemicals into doing fine art work for us, but just to give vision to the eye and radiant beauty to the world the eye looks upon—that is light's first and highest function.

Now, we have often treated Jesus in the curious fashion that we have treated the light. We have had our theological prisms to determine His nature, His measure, His mission. It is not wrong. It is interesting, useful, necessary to some degree. Just as the analysis of the spectrum will tell about the nature of the stars, so the reverent analysis of the great life of the Son of man will teach us something of the nature of God. Jesus is our court of

last appeal in such study. The demand that our theologies shall begin from the point of His consciousness is reasonable. All our systems and all our sources must be subordinate to Him. Prophets and apostles are alike His servants. Epistles and apocalypse are not so authoritative as His life. The keen, critical study is useful, but there is danger of everestimating its importance. There has been a tendency to reverse the order of the words in the text and say, "The light is the life of men." We have scrutinized Him, made creeds, built systems of thought, and said life—spiritual life, eternal life—consisted in accepting these. Or we have organized Churches, councils, hierarchies, and said the acceptance of and obedience to the infallible authority of these is man's life guarantee. But the true reading is, "The Life was the Light of men." Knowledge does not produce life. On the contrary, life gives true knowledge. Not by the analysis of His life, but by the reception of it, we are to get the truth. Not to the critics, but to devout and passionate lovers of the Son of God, did the truth concerning Him become known. Scribes and Pharisees made Him a subject of debate, and rejected Him. But sinners who received His cleansing grace, and sufferers who felt His healing touch, and fish-

ermen who staid in His company, knew the nature of His power and the glory of His love and the Divine mystery of His being. The contention as to the method of approach to the revelation of God in Christ is not yet over. Is it to be intellectual or moral? Does a soul need first light or life? And more and more the demand is for a vital acquaintance to meet the need of the soul and serve as the basis for all effective investigation. Perhaps you have been skeptical about some theological proposition concerning Him, and have declined His service until you could understand the problem. That 's an inversion of the true order of things. Receive Him into your guilt, your moral weakness, your low aims, and get His cleansing, His power, His inspiration, and then you will have both motive and material for your study.

Nor must we fail to adopt this as a law of service. Our lives are to be the light of men. Life is not for individual enjoyment, but for men. Life, in its completeness—inward forces and outward expressions—is to be luminous with God. All the gleams of word and deed are to be vital.

> "The word had breath and wrought
> With human hands the creeds
> In lowliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought."

II. THE LIGHT'S POWER.

"The darkness overcame it not." This is probably the truest putting of the thought of the text. It is a truth

1. *Historic.* Recall the conditions. The light came to a people with a striking national history. The national life had a dramatic origin, was based on holy law, had been blessed with heroic leaders. Their institutions had the sanction and seal of the Most High. They had truth immeasurably superior to that possessed by contemporary people—truth unalterably sublime. They had a lofty mission, the very dignity of which made them rigidly exclusive. Out of the religious superiority had come a bigoted hierarchy. Religious truth was their monopoly. Acceptable righteousness was their manufacture. Instead of liberating the light they possessed, they hampered and limited it by vexatious forms. And so when the Prince of Life appeared, they were in opposition to Him rather than in alliance with Him. Such hostility would seem no trifling matter to the life which had such feeble beginnings. With such a history and such a destiny, with splendid ceremonial and thoroughly organized system of worship, Israel was surely qualified to

decide whether the new teaching was true or false, and able to stamp out any sparks of fire and light which might be kindled by this Teacher who was so perversely careless of its judgment. And yet scorn and interdict, hatred and conspiracy, false witnesses as to the nature of the Life, and false explanations of its power, were alike unavailing to overcome it.

Heathenism, product of many soils, served by art, enriched by fascinating legend, defended by philosophy, sneered and mocked at the strange doctrine, but could not dim its light. Imperial Rome, following its good-natured tolerance with persistent persecution, tried to quench the light with the darkness of death, and could not. Ferocious followers of the Arabian prophet disputed its supremacy, ecclesiastical corruption dimmed its glory, moral apostasy betrayed it; rationalism, scientific and philosophical, counted it but superstitious darkness; yet it has not been overcome, but shines more widely, clearly, powerfully than ever before.

2. *Prophetic.* No defeat awaits the light. There are dark provinces to be illuminated, much territory to be possessed, the final triumph is not yet. Discouragement sometimes unnerves our faith. The perfect day seems sadly distant. But the very magnitude of the light's mission should make us patient.

Great propositions can not have their truth proved in a day. Small personal problems may be settled by the experiment of a minute, but Newton's magnificent theory of universal gravitation required twenty years of patient testing and waiting for fresh light before its verification could be published to the world. Jesus Christ is the light of men. It takes a sadly long time for a recreant world to discover the truth of a proposition like that. But the proof of its truth is hastening. His life is in the forces which oppose Him. Those binary stars of your life, reason and conscience, get all their light from "the Sun of Righteousness." Reason asserts itself against His life, and is itself the product of that life and thrills with it. Conscience ignores Him, and professes to be quite independent of His influence, and, behold, all its moral brightness is a gleam from His glory. All our prating about natural goodness will seem like childish prattle when we understand the measure of His dominion. Some day the unrecognized Christ will be known, and an obedient world will know why its heart burned within it while He walked with it in its way.

And may we not find here a promise of the triumph of this shining life in personal experience? Sad circumstances shadow its light, selfishness chills

its fire, obscuring tempers ruin the vision it offers. But out of the disqualifications of inherited temperament, the prisons of unfavorable surroundings, the power of habit, the chill of doubt, the deadening, paralyzing effect of failure, we shall at last come triumphant. The light will reach high noon in our souls.

"How does the soul grow? Not all in a minute;
Now it may lose ground, and now it may win it;
Now it resolves, and again the will faileth;
Now it rejoiceth and now it bewaileth;
Now its hopes fructify, then they are blighted;
Now it walks sunnily, now gropes benighted;
Fed by discouragements, taught by disaster,
So goes it forward, now slower, now faster,
Till, all the pain past, and failures made whole,
It is full grown, and the Lord rules the soul."

IV.

SELF-CARE.

"Take heed to thyself."—1 Tim. iv, 16.

"THYSELF." How large is the word? Does it mean body? That food and shelter may be thought about? That so, this marvelously skillful machine may be fed with the power it needs for endurance and achievement? This faithful reporter be kept sensitive and responsive to the appeal of every wonder, every force, every danger outside itself? "Give attention to thy body, to its strength, its grace, its beauty." Is this the apostle's meaning? This, indeed, in part, since this is involved. But the world needs not to have any great emphasis put on this duty. There are some neglects, indeed, in this realm, neglects which demand warnings. There are some failures to remember the sacredness of the body and the greatness of its needs. But when we consider the vast energies given to body-service, we feel that no very powerful exhortation on behalf of the body

is needed. Alas! that so many have been content with this narrow definition of "self." Absorption in trade, devotion to fashion, declare that with some the care of the body, the decoration of the body are supremely important. Alas! that with so many others, sad, hard, bitter circumstances almost compel the belief that the body is the "self." That hunger and thirst and nakedness make the body a despot, and to feed and clothe and shelter it the supreme duty of man. The social state which compels so many people to accept this lie for the truth is wrong somewhere.

Does the word "thyself" mean intellect? So a smaller circle believe. Emerson says: "Water dissolves wood, iron, and salt; air dissolves water; electric fire dissolves air; but the intellect dissolves fire, gravity, laws, method, and the subtlest unnamed relations of nature in its resistless menstruum." And those who exalt the intellect to the place of supreme importance, provide as the needs of self, books, which, as Carlyle has said, "Though but poor bits of rag-paper with black ink on them," are nevertheless the most wonderful and worthy things we make; and time for meditation and training. And attention to body and mind is partial obedience to this command, for these are elements of

the complete life. Food and raiment, house and school, commerce and literature, are answers to this apostolic demand that self shall be attended to. But they are not complete answers. To eat and drink and toil with hand and brain, to think and learn and speak, these are not the whole round of human duties. We are not loyal to "self" if we stop with these. We have not measured "self" if we explore no further. Who does not know that there is something finer than bone and muscle, fairer than feature or form, no matter what the grace of these may be; something with clearer, further vision than keen-eyed intellect; something mightier than determined will; something larger than either, larger than all? Intangible, mysterious, immeasurable, call it what you will—soul, spirit—it gives to the body its rarest beauty, it makes the intellect radiant with the fires of genius, it inspires the will to its noblest achievements. That which is in all and through all and over all, deeper, greater, grander than body and mind which serve it, is the real self. It is this that relates us to God; that makes us capable of receiving the inspiration of the Almighty, and with that inspiration understanding; that makes men and women candles of the Lord, able to catch and hold and give the fire of God's own life.

"Take heed to thyself!" To the deepest self; to that which underlies all that is visible; to that which gives meaning and value to all achievement; which gives a man weight among his fellows, and brings him homage and trust, even though his deeds may not seem great. "Take heed." Make this innermost, uttermost self pure, clean, strong. Conduct will then take care of itself, for this "I," this radiant, Godlike self will think in all thought, and move in all action. What are its needs?

I. NEEDS.

1. *Vision.* First, we must have our ideal You might say, "Better first see what the self is before thinking of what it should be but is not." But, no; the ideal must always be first. Thorwaldsen sat one day before his completed statue of Christ, and as he looked at it he burst into tears. He is satisfied at last; he has attained his ideal, reached the summit of his ambition. He expects no further progress in his art. The ideal was first. Through all the long years of toil it had dwelt within him. The almost-speaking Christ that brought tears into the sculptor's eyes was a thought before it was a thing. To know the marble thoroughly, its angles, veins, interior soundness or flaws, this would not be the

proper method for the artist; indeed, not a possible method. He could not know the innermost facts of his material until he had begun to shape it to the lines of his ideal. It is said of Michael Angelo that after he had been some time at work on his statue of Christ, he discovered a flaw in his marble, and cast it aside as unworthy his subject. The flaw was revealed by the growth of the Christ. It is even so in that infinitely higher process in which God Himself is the Artist, and the soul is the material and the Son of God is the Ideal. It is the progress of the Image in us, the formation of the Christ, that most surely reveals the flaws. And so, if asked what is the first need of the soul, we must say, not the sight of its sin, but the sight of its Christ, and by this method as by no other, will the sin be seen. "Know thyself" is a wise enough maxim, but we must make it mean if we want to know the best results, know thy possible self, which is the real self. The sinful soul is the false self, the spotless soul is the true. Study the true, and you will best know the lie of the false. We recognize all this in our ordinary judgments. Sometimes we feel that we have been mean and low and contemptible in thought or wish or conduct, and we loathe ourselves. But why should we? Because we know that when we have chosen to be foul, we have not

been true, but false to our real self. Where does the loathing come from? From the true self. And so we do have the ideal in us all the time. And the ideal frowns upon the real when the real is sinful, and the soul scourges itself for daring to be false, and demands that the offenses be purged away. The vision of Christ, for He is the soul's ideal, admitted to be such even by those who deny some of His claims. O, for a clear sight of the holy Christ! Angelico, the artist monk, cared for no subject for his matchless skill save Christ and the angels. And so the walls of his cell were gradually covered by scenes celestial and divine, the creations of his divine pencil. The bare, cheerless walls of his poor home, made radiantly glorious by the portrayed life of the Lord, whom he so passionately loved. And so he was shut in ever by his vision of the Divine. O, that we may do something similar! Take home and into our conception of what it should be; paint Christ. Take business, and in the methods we adopt and the spirit we cherish, have Christ. Take our social relationships, our outlook upon men and in them all have Christ for our Ideal.

2. *Purpose.* It is not enough to see, we must choose. The bright vision of holy manhood is not merely to please us with a moment's glimpse, as though the soul had climbed some mountain sum-

mit of holy vision, not for residence there, but simply for prospect, that some bright memory of the heights might cheer it in the low valley of its sinful life. Not this, but life upon the heights. The earnest choice of goodness; to be true to the vision; to have kindled within us, not only admiration, but determination; to have the fiber of unchangeable decision wrought into all the future of the soul's growth. How suicidal the course that refuses to win what is seen! The sight of the Christ, of the man, the woman you ought to be, is the proof that the soul's eye is open, and that is matter for gratitude; but it is not enough. If threading a thicket, are we to close our eyes to the gleaming light that shows the way out of the tangle into the open? If climbing a peak, over bowlders and through brush, shall we close our eyes to the path and summit, and wander blindly on in danger and uncertainty? If, in its difficult, dangerous way in the world, the soul may look with wondering, worshiping eyes upon the Christ of God, shall it be mad enough to choose blindness and stumble on at the bidding of impulse and custom? O, to walk in the glorious light of what we should be! We may do this, and do it hopefully. When appealed to by this picture of absolute truth, radiant holiness and ministering love,

which sometimes we see, we need not droop discouraged. It is no moral mirage mocking the thirsty soul in its desert with false promises. This vision is the bright portrait of our possible selves, our real selves. We have a right to all its treasures of goodness. Despair has no place in us, because sin has no right in us. The expectation of failure in our struggle is sin's lie. A fall is not a failure. It is purpose, the soul's purpose, that tells its quality, not the details of conduct. It is by our purpose that God rates us. As Browning saw:

"Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work,' must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account:
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped:
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God."

It is the life's currents, not its eddies, that tells of its destiny. There is great fascination in watching a mountain brook. One of its lessons is this of unchanging purpose; it has a goal, and moves toward it with steady, irresistible flow. Its purpose is not always displayed in the same way, or with the same clearness. Sometimes a furious rush over the cliff that lies in its path; sometimes moving with fuller volume and smooth surface, smooth even though jagged rocks lie in its bed, kept smooth by its own determined flow; sometimes musical, as it ripples in shallow cascades; sometimes silent, with no rocks to disturb its peace; ever moving on with every variety of motion. If you study the eddies on its edges, you might fancy it had reversed its decision and was turning back, but the stream must not be judged by its eddies. If you watch it smiling in the meadow, with movement hardly perceptible, you might fancy it had forgotten its purpose, and was halted forever, but the stream must not be judged by its local appearance. Its movement never ceases. Furious or peaceful, noisy or silent, in spite of rocks, in spite of eddies, it is moving on to its ocean home. We need a purpose like that in the soul, a purpose unchanging, never checked by obstacles; though not always straight in

its course, yet flowing with the whole volume of its current Godward.

3. *Power.* To be true to our purpose, patient, persistent, is to get power to make it effective. How shall the sinful things which beckon us be made weak, and the appealing Christ be made mighty? By making an absolute surrender to the purpose, to be Christlike. There must be no half-heartedness. And as a result, "the Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and ye shall receive power." This should be our plea; not for peace, that all obstacles to our purpose be removed, but for power to conquer obstacles, even as the flowing stream carves channels out of the very rocks which would hinder it. The apostles, when in danger from persecution, prayed, not for safety, but for power to keep on steadfastly. "And now, Lord, grant to Thy servants power, that they may speak Thy Word with boldness." Power from the Holy Spirit! Always. A mightier movement toward God, as we get more of God in us. Inevitably so by a very simple law, the law of spiritual gravitation. As our lives get more Divine in their bulk, God will have a mightier attraction for them. There are circular processes in grace as well as in nature. The sea toward which the stream flows sends back the rains and the snows, which swell the

stream's volume, and make its strength greater. Surrender to the purpose to be Godlike will bring the power to fulfill the purpose. That means steady obedience, for obedience shows the surrender. Every act of obedience is a victory, and every victory over sin carries in it strength as well as triumph, since it adds to our stock of godliness.

II. USES.

We are to note that that is written to a servant. We might fancy that the apostle is counseling a selfish course in this, "Take heed to thyself," until we remember he is writing to a servant, and the care of self is a part of life's service. And we have observed the right order when we have asked first for attention to the soul's needs, because our first and best service to the world is to be what we ought to be. "No man liveth unto himself;" the apostle says in his figure of the temple, that we are to be "living stones;" that is, aside altogether from the active efforts which may be made the life, as a life, is a necessary part of the growing building of humanity, helping on its beauty, its strength, its completeness. Character is no mere choice personal property. It can not be fenced in from common view and reserved for individual enjoyment. Men

sometimes do that in regard to their material treasures They build a shamefully high, selfish wall around a beautiful estate, sheltering themselves from the perhaps hungry gaze of the passer-by. But no such sheltering wall can be built around character treasures. Inward spiritual treasures will enrich the lives that are near through voice and touch and glance, as the rose scatters its fragrance, as the sun flings his glories through the dark spaces. And inward, spiritual sinfulness is volatile, like some powerful, poisonous fluid, and will escape even without consent to curse other souls. Influencing others by what we are—that supremely; and so it is of the first importance that we "take heed" to ourselves and our own needs; that *we* be good, and so put strength into the faith of some soul which has been poisoned by suspicion and almost lost confidence in any goodness; that we inspire hope in some weary, struggling sinner; that we give lessons in love to spirits made narrow and small and miserable by selfishness. And if we attempt any definite effort to help any one, still it must be true that the innermost soul must be in the attempt to give it any value. We may talk in words of beauty, words true in themselves, until death stiffens the lips, and if genuine, loving soul has not been sounding

in the speech, it has been of small use, like the doubtful music of sounding brass and of clanging cymbal. We may stretch forth ministering hands and drop generous charities until death builds about the muscles an unbreakable prison, and if soul—genuine, generous soul—has not been throbbing in the finger-tips, and trying to utter itself in the gifts, then the benefits have been the perfunctory products of a clanking machine. The supreme need of needy souls is ourselves, not anything separable from ourselves. And our first duty in service is to give self, pure, true, earnest self. And if we do just this, by simply living ourselves into the lives about us, we need not be discouraged at the smallness of our service. Here is the difficulty with our organized, charitable work. It is a good method in the sphere of its operations, but it can not possibly minister to the whole circle of human needs. It saves waste of means? O yes, it is economical enough, and especially economical of tear-drops and hand-clasps, and cheery, helpful smiles. John Hall once asked, "Who ever saw a tear in the eye of a committee?" You can give a check on your money to a charitable society, and make it your executor, but you can not possibly give it a negotiable draft on your sympathy, on your own loving soul. This is no word

against the society, for it has its work, and that is ministering to the body. But this does not alter the fact that within the hungry, shivering bodies which the society may feed and clothe there are hungry souls, and bread can not feed those souls, and love can. This was the need of the leper who begged of Sir Launfal, not bread and not water, but warm, loving sympathy. And so, though the offered crust was moldy and coarse and brown, and the water was given in a wooden bowl, yet

> "With fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
> And it was red wine he drank with his thirsty soul."

The organized charity is useful, but not as a substitute for personal life. To make it a substitute, to fancy ourselves released from personal ministry because we pay something into its treasury, is to be false to ourselves, dishonest with the sad souls who need the touch of our lives. We must regard such a society, not as a substitute, but as an ally, in the ministering work of the spirit.

And, now, as to the activities of the soul. What occupations shall we choose? What law shall we observe in choosing our work? The law of harmony, the law of obedience. To do what the life demands shall be done. To study our aptitudes and powers, and select the task in which these may

best speak. It is not example which should rule us here, but the demands of the soul itself. There is no reason that we should do what father or mother have done, because they have done it. Occupation ought to be the utterance of the deepest self. Choose the work through which the soul may best speak. But you say circumstances may prevent. Yes, and it is that sad necessity resting upon so many of doing what they do not enjoy doing that produces so much suffering. And perhaps body and mind have been denied the training which is necessary to forms of work in which we fancy the soul could best speak. Yes, it is true. Choices are hindered by circumstances. Only at least let us be true to the longing to speak as best we can what is best in us, and though the power of expression be but small, and the way of expression be but humble, the soul will make itself felt. Said Emerson: "Let the great soul incarnated in some woman's form, poor and sad and single, in some Dolly or Joan going out to service and sweep chambers and scour floors, and its effulgent day-beams can not be muffled or hid, but to sweep and scour will instantly appear supremely beautiful actions, the top and radiance of human life, and all people will get mops and brooms." And then let us remember that in being

true to self, in doing what we can do, and not foolishly envying what some one else is doing, we best help on the whole work of the world. Our occupations are parts of the world's work. Better still, they are parts of God's work. And so we must not merely ask what line of work can I make most money at, but how can I best develop what is in me, and so contribute to the world's need. Now, the world needs more than teachers, preachers, doctors, lawyers. Its needs are innumerable, and seem to be increasing. It needs machinists and painters and manufacturers and grocers and tailors, and all manner of tradesmen. And we are to understand that in being true to these occupations we are serving God and man. Put your soul's integrity, your soul's strength, and your soul's truth into every bit of toil you do. Not merely that you may win the reputation of being a reliable workman, but that you may know yourself to be the world's and God's honest servant.

"Take heed to thyself" as a servant of the Most High. Be no poacher on the service of another. God has a use for thee. Be no copyist of the methods of another. Be thyself. And so will the whole symmetrical work of God be furthered by thy deed. Wield your own hammer. Strike your

own blow at the mountain obstacle in the world's path. Insert your own lever beneath the burdens that lie on the world's life. Only strike somewhere! Lift something! Serve somehow! Be true, ever true to the deep, true, spiritual self; true to the God who will reign, if you will let Him, in the soul's secret place, and His strength will nerve your arm, and His grace will bless your work. "Take heed" to thy needs, which God is "able to supply according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" and to thy uses, that so God's great plan may be helped on by thy life and toil!

V.

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR TIME.

"Redeeming the time."—Col. iv, 5; Eph. v, 16.

THE Revised Version suggests a better rendering, "Buying up the opportunity," allowing no moment to slip through your hands, making your market of the occasion. Let us apply the principle to

I. GETTING.

1. *Paul's example.* Paul was intensely Jewish, but he was more. "A Pharisee of the Pharisees," he was not lax in his reverence for Jewish history and tradition as was a Sadducee. He recognized and emphasized the value of oracles and covenants. He was versed in the law and faithful in the ordinances. But he was also a Roman citizen of a distinguished city. Dr. Ramsay emphasizes the fact that in the first century, when citizenship was highly prized and jealously guarded, the possessor of that dignity was put thereby among the aristocracy of

any provincial town. And since this was an honor belonging to Paul by birth, and not by purchase, it is probable that his family was distinguished and moderately wealthy. His appeal to his citizenship shows how he prized it; his friendly treatment by the Roman authorities shows how that citizenship had molded him. He had not the narrow, exclusive Jewish spirit. His breadth, indeed, was the inevitable outcome of his distinctive mission to the Gentiles, but would be primarily due to his early surroundings and training. Indeed, it is not difficult to believe that his call by God to a world-wide ministry was based upon his world-wide sympathy. There is an inherent fitness in the choice of God. Out of this breadth of spirit in Paul there came breadth of view, a fair, reasonable view of his age, a wholesome attitude toward it, and a just estimate of its needs and values. He was no bigot. He did not believe that a Jew had a monopoly of virtue, nor that his ancestral faith had a monopoly of truth. He himself tells us that he adapted himself to his hearers. That is, his bearing was friendly and not antagonistic. And with one of Paul's passionate earnestness of spirit, that gracious manner was more than a matter of policy. It was the admission of his own truthful soul that there were good things

in the lives of those to whom he spoke. And to these things that were noble he appealed. He did not violently attack the current philosophies in his original preaching, although he did expose their falsities in his letters, as in this, when they were evidently perverting the minds of Christians. Nor did Paul ridicule crude religious beliefs. He was courteous, just and generous in the cities of Galatia as in the Areopagus at Athens, acknowledging existing truth, adding to it from the fullness of the glorious gospel, until "Christ had been placarded before their eyes." This, then, is the attitude of this representative of the most high God. He was gracious, considerate, sensible. Clear in his view of the evil of the days, but also wise in his perceptions of all existing excellencies and merits.

2. *Our attitude toward our age.* There are souls whose views are very earnest, but very narrow; who conceive of the world as a doomed ship, fast breaking up and driving on to complete wreck. The business of the gospel is to rescue as many as possible from the doomed hulk, and keep them in the safe seclusion of a religious life. Escape is their definition of salvation. Scorn is the proper attitude toward the great complex world life, with pity for those who have not yet been guaranteed against its

doom. The world's varied activities are not only worthless, but dangerous. They are all to be carefully shunned. Now, zeal can not save that view from being a travesty of the kingdom, whose growth is to be like that of a grain of mustard-seed, with widening, compelling influence like that of the leaven in the meal. And there are multitudes to whom the characteristics of the present age are all alarming. They think with longing regret of the good old days, the old safe habits and methods. Modern educational activity they regard as a doubtful boon. Some, whose narrow circumstances and lack of opportunity are sufficient explanation of their attitude, cheerfully sing the praises of ignorance, and predict the doom of those who are ungodly enough to be eager to know. As though brains and religion are sworn foes in a feud which is to be eternal. Others, who appreciate the practical value of a trained mind, yet treat education timidly, as a somewhat dangerous ally to be caged, lest it master them. Modern intellectual activity is confusing, and, on the whole, deadly to faith. Modern literature, so vast and varied, is a tempting field indeed. But the flowers are few, and the poisonous weeds are many.

Now, of course, it would be false to facts indis-

criminately to commend our age. Eulogy needs to be moderate. In our intellectual work there is plenty of sewerage left, though not so much as formerly. The appetite for literary garbage is certainly less ravenous than it was. And in our restless movements—political, social, and industrial—there is a sad lot of bad work. Corruption, snobbery, artificiality, and selfishness are still rampant. But there is something besides carrion, and we will find the better food, unless, vulture-like, we have an affinity for the bad. Take the realm of thought. There is much that is noble in our modern literature. That is true in all the realms of it. In fiction there is not only artistic work, but high purpose and serious, earnest temper. The simple, pure, true things in life are portrayed. The moral beauties and forces of the soul are recognized and treated reverently. Even negative writers, who treat God as an unknown quantity, yet feel and tell the pressure and the power of duty. And there is plenty of good, hopeful, wholesome philosophy. Those dreary prophets of a fast-settling night, to whom the times are not only out of joint, in the grip of deadly diseases, to whom there is no goodness, to whom we are all a lot of degenerates, their shrieks of despair are the cries forced by the pain of souls outraged by their own

lack of faith. Take our modern religious literature. What volume, reach, insight, passion, it has! Was Christ ever so prominent? Ever so studied? Ever so loved? Even the fiction which weaves stories of more or less merit around His matchless life, and of which we have had a great deal recently, is a revelation of the fast-spreading desire to get nearer to Him. There is a new breath and a new life in our modern theology. There are multitudes of superb works, critical and constructive, from the pens of those who adore Jesus, whose perpetual attitude is that of prostration before Him. Why should we fear such writing, which glows with the fire of spiritual passion? Some people do so fear. Is it hard to believe that God is active in the thinking of those who love Him? Is God present in the world of natural force, and absent from the world of human life? Get in touch with these best things in your reading. "Read the saints," as James T. Fields said was his custom. Get to feel the thrill and throb of the surging Christ-life in the thought of to-day.

And our activities to-day, what about them? Periodicals have frequent articles on the higher life of our great cities. There is such a higher life. Civic clubs, municipal leagues, social settlements, college settlements, Church settlements, forward

movements are the evidence of a new interest and a new purpose in righteousness, political, social, individual, Divine, for our cities, which are indeed the centers of the life and of the storm of our civilization. Man's humanity to man is deeper and broader. There is more pity, more justice, more benevolence, more intolerance of sham, a fiercer, straighter-backed sincerity among men. Find these things, these forces. Feel them, welcome them, exult in them, surrender to them.

II. Giving.

This is the special point of the appeal. "Buying up your opportunities" to serve. The apostle has not outlined a selfish policy. The world is a market-place full of treasures, but Christian souls are not doing their marketing for the purpose of getting choice bits of personal benefit, but to get chances to serve. This is the general setting of the text. In your relation to your fellows, buy to the full your opportunities to help them.

1. *The motive.* "The days are evil." See the effect a sad fact has upon a robust soul. "The days are evil." Is that truth a depressing weight? No, it is a sharp spur. Some have said, "The days

are evil," therefore we will retire to caves and dens, and monasteries and wearisome vigils and cruel mortifications of the flesh, and prayer and meditation. Some modern worshipers say the intellectual days are evil; the theological, critical days are evil; therefore we will not read. We will assure ourselves that the blazing light of modern knowledge and modern method is only a flash in the pan, and we will keep in the subdued light of the fading past. And citizens say the political days are evil; therefore I will take no interest in politics, will stay away from the primaries, will gather close about me the robes of my safe, useless citizenship, lest they get soiled. Now, the apostolic method and appeal are just the opposite. The ecclesiastical days are evil? Then fight the evil, do not stay outside of the Church and criticise it. Come inside and purge it. The critical days are evil? Then wrest the critical work away from those whose work is negative, rationalistic, faith-destroying, and give it into the hands of those who are devout, and then let them do their work without nagging them. The political days are evil? Do not stay at home and be lazy. Wrestle with the evil. What are your moral muscles for? Why should evil days dim our vision of God? Paul met evil—ecclesiastical hate, philosophical scorn, im-

perial indifference, and then persecution. Stones and rods bruised him, hunger weakened him, mad mobs threatened him, prisons shut him in, Roman chains galled him. Did the vision of God fade out of his life? Ah, no! Jesus saw evil—the steely glitter of hate in the eyes of religious leaders, the rough violence of hard soldiers, the gross selfishness of temple degraders, the sensual faces of harlots, the cunning of publicans; evil mocking Him, tempting Him, insulting Him. What then? Could He not see God because He saw evil? Did He anticipate the wail of modern pessimism that God does not live because evil does live? Ah, no! To His brave, blessed eyes God was always present, shining, sustaining, inspiring, save in that one appalling moment, when the tempest of His own chosen, redeeming passion shook and blinded Him on the cross. "The days are evil!" O, servants of God, rebuke the evil, attack the evil that darkens and curses the days!

2. *Method.* Look at the next phrase, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Salt makes speech wholesome, but it makes it palatable as well. There was a fine grace and courtesy in Paul's ministry. Before Jewish councils, before Roman officials, before the Athenian assembly, his grace is notable. Jesus had unsparing denunciation

for hypocrites, but the sweetest, most gracious tenderness for outcast sinners. There is a great deal of unwritten history about the gracious manner of the Son of God, which accounts for His popularity with those who avoided the Pharisees. Be gracious as you go on your crusades against the evils which hurt your fellows. Boldness does not mean boorishness. Earnestness is not damaged by good manners. Jesus was as full of grace as He was of truth.

3. *Passion.* Think of it! Paul is in prison; he must be very weary. Has he not earned the right to rest? Whatever is true about his right, he has no disposition to rest. "Pray for us, that God would open a door of utterance unto us." Nothing could daunt him. The time of his imprisonment gives him the opportunity for new ministry. Bonds, delays, soldiers, all the retainers of the emperor's household proved to be fuel to feed the flame of his passion to serve. Service as life's passion! This age is notably rich, not only because of its material wealth, its exact knowledge, its amazing inventions, its industrial triumphs, but because it is so inspiringly stocked with opportunities to serve. Is not that a noble, an ideal passion?

When we contrast with it the low passions which

move men, our souls are sad that there are so many to whom the muck-rake is more interesting than is the angel. So many there are who give themselves to lowest tastes. There is in the gallery of the Luxembourg at Paris a picture called "The Decadence of the Romans"—a picture of a splendid hall, where a drunken feast is in progress. The old Roman strength is gone from the faces of the feasters, faces which are in striking contrast with the features of the statues of ancient Roman characters which are around the hall, but faces the likeness of which may be found in the streets of Paris constantly. That story about Leonardo da Vinci finding a noble youth to serve as a model for his Christ in his famous picture, and then later getting the face of the same youth, become sensual and worldly through long-continued sin, to serve as a model for his Judas, is simply an illustration of a process that is perpetually going on. There are multitudes in the grip of drink and gambling who get to prize life mostly for the opportunities it brings for the gratification of their own lusts. How horrible it is! And there are multitudes more who care only for life's material treasures, and not for its noble things of truth and duty, who gain the world and can

gratify every taste and travel as they please to view its beauties and its gayeties. They have prized life as being full of opportunities to make money and to win ease and enjoyment. And there are thoughtless multitudes whose passion is pleasure, whose chief thought is personal amusement, who fritter away time in games, which after a time seem to grip them like an insanity. It can not be true that these people have not brains enough, breadth enough, height enough, soul enough to feel the pull, the plea, the glory of beautiful service for others. Is it not an awful irony when society can be engrossed with gossip about balls and theaters and card-parties, and have not time to discuss the poor and wretched and sinful, and to plan crusades of righteousness and love? Is that the social leadership to follow?

O, to kindle in the fire of this apostolic passion to serve! Go marketing in the days. Buy up eagerly every opportunity to help needy souls and bodies. These opportunities to serve the evil-darkened age will soon be over. Let the thought of the rapidly-nearing end thrill us to new endeavor. What you have received from the age of light and warmth and wealth are bonds, obligations, imperatives of God, commanding you to serve. Our attitude should

be the eagerness of an alert buyer. Our duties should not be our weights, but our wings.

"'Joy is a duty,'—so with golden lore
The Hebrew rabbis taught in days of yore,
And happy human hearts heard in their speech
Almost the highest wisdom man can teach.

But one bright peak still rises far above,
And there the Master stands, whose name is Love,
Saying to those whom heavy tasks employ,
'Life is divine when duty is a joy.'"

VI.

ROBBERY.

"Will a man rob God?"—Mal. iii, 8.

The idea is repugnant. Yet, in the case of Israel, the charge is easily sustained. In tithes and offerings, those stipulated belongings of God, He certainly had been robbed. With equal ease may the guilt of man, in this crime of theft from God, be established to-day. There are treasures which are indubitably God's, and of these men do unquestionably rob Him.

I. He is Robbed of His Authority.

1. *God's rightful sovereignty in the life.* Though materialism may make a great din in our ears and repeatedly assault our reverence, yet ordinary minds are simple enough and true enough to make room for God in existing forces and allow Him a voice in the disposal of events. Yet the very minds that find His authority in universal matter and force are

oblivious to His presence and recreant to His authority in the control of the soul. They are not materialists. They are "egotheists." While willing to admit God as the center of universal existence, they prefer to retain self as the center of individual existence. It is the old Ptolemaic theory of the universe applied to the firmament of the life. Such life-theory is foolish as well as false. The soul can never make known its astonishing, its Divine magnitudes; the life can never spread itself out in beautiful, orderly array until God is recognized as the center of the being, any more than the glorious immensities of the ancient heavens could be known when they were interpreted by the old, puny conception of their measure. To rob God of His authoritative place in the life is to rob life itself of its grandeur.

The soul in its normal state acknowledges God's sovereignty. Lowell pictures the first man in his naturalness as God-conquered, with his face upturned to the heavens. The Greek word for man means "the upward-looking one." This native attitude of the soul we return to when in experience we come to our vision of God. The soul and God are definitely set over against each other; the will turns from its exile of rebellion or indifference, and,

yielding, is mastered. It may be in flashing, blinding way, as with Paul; it may be quietly, like opening leaf or dawning light. No matter about the method, so that the result be the choice of God as the soul's ruler. Of this rightful sovereignty men rob God. In neither plan nor motive is there any place for God or His glory. Though in the processes of selfish living, obedience is given to God's unescapable laws—laws vital, chemical, social, industrial, yet such obedience has been no tribute to God, but rather an offering to self, an offering made because such laws are preservative—ruling in realms of blood and muscle, energy, intercourse, trade. Alas, that in the culture, the comfort, the plenty of overflowing lives, ordinary honesty should be absent! God has a right to supremacy in our souls. There are moments of experience in most lives when the Divine right is acknowledged. When the soul, in its retrospect, notes the evidences of guidance in a wisely ordered past, and worships; when it stands "glory-smitten" in the solemn calm of nature's sublimities, and these momentary submissions of the life which experience holds, are gleams of a glory in which the soul should evermore stand.

2. *God's authority in conscience.* It will be claimed that the indictment for theft belongs only to

those whose lives are mean and selfish and sordid; that if one is obedient to the moral law found in the soul, then God is not defrauded. This may be granted if the real glory of conscience is understood and all her leadings honestly followed. But there are those who deny that conscience enshrines God; who tell us that conscience is just the product of social experience. The choice of virtue is a simple matter of policy—the choice is made because of some benefit or fancied benefit involved therein, and so the loftiest human goodness is disguised selfishness. Love and truth and sacrifice are but the expressions of an intolerable egotism. Those who believe in the true greatness of man will not brook this insult to his moral nature. And this assault upon the dignity of conscience is easily repulsed. An appeal to experience will teach us that conscience works instinctively, and always has so worked if history may be trusted. Her approvals or condemnations have not been the tardy results of labored reasoning. They have been rather as sunbursts or thunderbolts to the soul. Voltaire, surprised into prayer in a thunder-storm in the Alps, is good evidence that the moral consciousness is instinctive and not acquired. Even though he immediately cursed his devotional folly, his curses did

not alter the fact that in an emergency of his life his spiritual instincts mastered him. Take the higher ranges of moral feeling. Think of the spontaneous pity which the sight of suffering calls into life; of the unswerving, uncalculating fidelity to truth which history records. When Paul, knowing that bonds and imprisonments awaited him, said, "None of these things move me," was the splendid old hero a selfish, sordid calculator, planning new benefits for self? When Luther declared he would go to his trial if as many devils aimed at him as there were tiles on the roof, was this brave warrior for the truth a trader for profit? When Christ stood in steady, unfaltering patience, waiting for the scourge to torture Him; when, in His miraculous goodness, in the midst of the anguish of the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them," and in triumphant love cried, "It is finished," was that Divine character—so marvelous in its unflinching fidelity, so overwhelming in its sacrificing love—the outcome of selfish motive? The theory of utility as explanatory of conscience leads us to blasphemy. It makes Jesus a selfish schemer.

But you say: "We have not such low views of conscience. We find in its deliverances something higher than selfishness. And because we believe in

the majesty of conscience, we yield to its authority, and are honestly wishing and working to do right because it is right. High principles of truth and justice and mercy govern us." Such a claim, if made, is a lofty one. Yet, even with its truth granted, you may still be open to the charge of robbing God. If the moral life has in it no prayer, no praise, no worship, no reverence, no love for God, no loyal allegiance to Him, it is treasonable. Any fair analysis of conscience yields the presence of the Eternal. If the great Lawgiver is present in the moral laws you obey, shall His presence be ignored? Loyalty to goodness must mean something better than the worship of impersonal law and become rather the positive passionate movement of your soul to the living God. Not mere assent to the righteousness of His law. Not mechanical conformity to His will—but a positive attachment—a union of your troubled, wayward heart with His strong, loving heart. A union that never brings a thought of His authority being a burdensome thing. For the authority recognized is the authority of love, and the obedience given is but the spontaneous response of the soul to the wish of its lover, and the goodness of the life is no mere calculated and treasured obedience to righteous

commandment, but rather the inevitable result of His presence—God's answer to the "jubilant pining and longing" for Him with which the soul is on fire. Be sure of this: If the authority which has its home in conscience is not recognized as having its source in God, He is defrauded. Will a man rob God?

II. HE IS ROBBED OF HIS GRACE.

1. *In personal restoration.* Grace is God's richest treasure and highest right. Helpfulness is His special prerogative. Love is His brightest glory. We are not to fancy that God's grace is a passive thing; that while His executive power is ceaselessly active in innumerable forces, and His wisdom unweariedly works itself into matchless plans; His love, on the contrary, simply reveals Him as quietly, patiently, waiting for the appeals of need to reach Him. This would be narrowing His love to the false limits of our own languid conceptions. Have we sufficiently thought of His love, not merely as a readiness to help, but as a passion for helping? Have we believed in the searching eagerness of His love? When we think of the ministering heavens; when we look upon the bursting grain and the ripening fruit of our har-

vests; when we marvel at the manifold appliances and adaptations which make every day of life a miracle, do we find no suggestion of the eager, impetuous kindness of God? And if in material things we see His face sweet with thoughtful care, and in material forces feel His hands ministering tenderly to these bodies, is there no form, no voice, no power through which we may learn of His perfect care for our souls? Thank God, yes! Nature has no such emphatic statement of God's care for that which is mortal in us as the life and death of Jesus Christ have of His care for that which is immortal. In the face of our Brother we see the face of our Father. In His tireless ministry and suffering death is the picture of God's eager grace, yearning to take our poor, broken souls and heal them. Have we given room to this grace in our lives? Have we let it play among all our needs? Have we received its pardon, its comfort, its holiness? If not, then we must plead guilty to this charge of robbing God. To solve the mighty problems of the soul's life is His wish and His right. To deny Him the joy of saving us is robbery. The conflict with sin is not an optional thing. The conflict is already upon us. It is not a mere question of sinful acts. It is sin within—a stain, a poison, a plague,

an inner spiritual wreck, an inferno in the soul. From what quarter may deliverance be expected? The very elements of the necessary triumph suggest the answer. Forgiveness is the first element. Our sin blackens our history. The past is unescapable. Reconciliation with it is necessary to harmony. It can not be viewed with any degree of calmness unless robed with mercy. God has been dishonored and practically defied. His will has been outraged. It is not merely true that "he that sinneth wrongeth his own soul"—that the sinner does violence to himself. This is, indeed, true. The laws violated in sinning are not merely laws graven on stone tablets or written in statute-books, but laws written in the soul itself. The chief danger of sin is, indeed, in depravity rather than penalty. But because the law which sin is a transgression of is a law of self it is none the less a law of God. A foul character *is* the soul's loss, but, too, it is the soul's theft from God. The sin that has been wasting the soul's time and destroying the soul's substance has therein been putting its thieving hand into the coffers of the Most High. "Forgive us" should be in the forefront of the soul's plea. Forgiveness is the offer and accompaniment of grace. But forgiveness—at least in its limited sense of freedom from penalty

—is of minor importance among the sinner's needed benefits. Deliverance from sin itself—how shall that be wrought? What method have you chosen for victory? Is your method that of natural development? Do you say "there is a law of progress within? If the soul is resigned to its workings, time, the essential factor in the process, will bring triumph?" Bushnell has well shown the inadequacy of such theory—which makes blameless holiness just the inevitable ripeness of ordinary growth. Why not follow the method in other disasters of the life? Here is a shattered bone. Will physical development restore its wholeness without the intervention of other power? Here is a raging fever. Will natural development cool its fires and expel its poison? Here, now, is a moral life, its forces in anarchy, its ruler dethroned, its depth shaken by tempests; will moral development, without the entrance of any new controlling force, still the storms, restore unity and peace? Will you then find victory not indeed in the uncertain outcome of an onward movement in which there may be no progress, but in the determined effort of your own will? That is a weary way, an impossible task. Will the patient, perpetual imprisonment of sinful forces issue in free spontaneous goodness? Though your

will be strong enough to forge prison bars for your passions, will the grim prison which holds your sullen soul be a fair substitute for the free, open heavens through which it might wing its way, on wings of faith and love, to the throne and heart of God? The problem is not how may your soul be dwarfed, repressed, chained, so that its sin may be prevented; but how may it be brought into liberty, unity, glad, joyous, exultant, enthusiastic holiness? Can your will solve that problem? Your poor, fettered will bring freedom? Ah, no! Yet here stands a Deliverer, and His name is the Son of God. Freedom is in His hand, and He says, "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." If you choose the prison-house of evil, when the Deliverer urges freedom upon you, you rob Him of a coveted opportunity for the action of His liberty-giving grace.

We who love Him are not guiltless in this matter. When grief has settled like a pall upon the soul; when a bright, happy past makes present pain the keener by its contrast; when the life's prospect is full of the gloom of sorrow and the terror of loneliness, where have we gone for comfort? Have we just wearily waited for the passage of time to dull grief's pain by weakening love's strength?

Have we hoped simply that busy occupation would beguile us into forgetfulness of our loss? Dreary comforters are such hopes. Treasonable, too. Have we any right to rob God of His right to take our bruised souls into His own hands and heal them? Shall we seek lower comforters when the Father is "the God of all comfort" and the Son is the "Consolation of Israel," and the Holy Ghost is the abiding "Comforter?" If we have trusted our God with our sins shall we keep our sorrows from Him? And then, again, in the fiery searching that has come in some time of solitude, and unsuspected corruption has been revealed, what has been the result? As we have found self with its "miserable omnipresence" in the motives of deeds that we fancied were pure; as we have been filled with loathing and longing by the disclosures of our innermost meanness and littleness—what then? Has despair settled upon us? Have we tried to settle down into a patient endurance of some necessary sinfulness. Have we assured ourselves that our prayer for deliverance can not be answered till death comes? Have we? Then we were traitors to the grace of God. Dare we deck death with the trophies of triumph which belong to the King? Grace is equal to this task. Be sure that the soul given to God

in an absolute, unalterable consecration will be cleansed and kept.

2. *In possible revelation.* God's design is a perpetual revelation of His grace. And the method of the revelation does not change. When God would make known the mystery of the ages, the solution of sin's problem—His own entrance into human life—He did it not by any clear logic and persuasive rhetoric of statement, but by incarnation. "God was *in* Christ," and the revelation of God in the life of Christ is the glorious sufficient promise of God in us. To-day, as then, it is true that the convincing statement of God's saving power is a Divine life. Still it is true that the "*life* is the light of men." Christ in you is the hope of your soul's glory, and, too, the hope of the world's glory. Your spirit is God's candle, and ought to flame with His life. Do you withhold yourself? Can God put no reliance on you? Must the weary world, in its search for help, turn disappointed from you? If with burning plea it says, "Sir, we would see Jesus," can you make Him known? Are the varied sides of your life in power and plenty and wisdom just so many clear lenses through which the life may shine, so many syllables through which the truth may speak, so many hands through which help may

come? Can you say "Yes?" Or must the answer be, "Alas! no; I live for self, I simply utter myself. The voice of my life has no Divine tone in it, the flame of my life has none of God's glory in it." If this be your confession, then you plead "guilty" to this charge of theft. You are robbing God. Your service is His right. "Will a man rob God?" Mournfully comes the answer, "Yet ye have robbed Me."

Robbery! A terrible indictment. A disgraceful, humiliating charge. Honesty we regard as one of the simple, ordinary virtues; yet we are dishonest if we steal from God our obedience, our trust, our love, our service. The charge may be easily sustained. "Guilty" must be the verdict of our own consciousness. Yet all the crime may be forgiven, all the past be mercy-covered, all the soul be mastered by God. The grace we have dishonored by neglect or partial trust is ready to grant us a blessing that more than answers our prayers and more than matches our longings.

VII.

A VISION AND A VOYAGE.

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them."—Acts xvi, 9, 10.

We may find here:

I. God's Attitude Toward the Needy.

1. *His answer to need.* The voice of need is an appeal to God, an appeal to which He listens. Our knowledge of Him is such as to remove all doubt upon that point. Our God is no personalized doctrine of fate, careless of the agonies of His creatures. Maurice speaks of some who would "make heaven clear by making it cold, and assert the dignity of the Divine essence by emptying it of love, and reducing it to nothingness;" but we have not so

received Him. He is no distant monarch, exalting Himself in spurious majesty, sufficient, apart from His creatures, uninterested, indifferent, not even curious about his own offspring. Such were some of the gods of man's conception. But our God is alert, attent, listening, eager, ministering, pleading, suffering; He is touched by the appealing need of the Macedonian pagans.

And it is an unspoken need. No Macedonian voice sounds in the heavens, rather a Macedonian vacancy lies uncovered beneath them. And the need is all the greater because unknown. The soul untroubled, content, ignorant of its need, blind to its condition, careless of its destiny, is in need more desperate than the soul whose alarm promises movement and search. And the unconscious soul, deaf and silent, is a pleader with God. His love is something more than a sympathetic readiness to respond to a deliberate demand made upon it; it is rather like the crowding, pressing atmosphere, eager to push its way into every vacuum in our nature, doing that always when not prevented by the impervious walls of our selfishness. As the far-stretching sea touches and presses upon the welcoming or resisting land, and continually alters its outline and changes its face; as the wider stretching

heavens hold in their unescapable embrace the rolling earth; so the persistent love of God pressing upon us, seeking entrance by every inlet to every secret place of our lives, is in itself the heaven in which our lives are set and through which they move. So much is clear. Need, though unspoken, and unknown, is in itself an eloquent plea, moving the heart of the Eternal. Paul's vision was God's message. Macedonia was touching God's heart, and He answered.

Is it our aim to be Godlike? Then we must carry an eager, burdened heart. Our pity is to be an overflowing thing. Not merely a kind of emotional reserve fund, to be drawn upon in startling emergencies, in nowise to be touched until the call is urgent, but rather a kind of balanced pressure in every direction, an entrance of our helping lives into every crevice of need. Not an occasional choking sensation, a tremulous voice, a tear-filled eye, when a mutilated or starving body fronts us; but a broad response, a clear, loving vision, which has an answer for the more profound needs of dark, hungry *souls*. We have pity for the unfortunate in temporal things; it is a delight to carry food and drink and to touch tenderly aching bodies; this is the practical service upon which we put emphasis

to-day; a social Christianity, a gospel of food and clothing and cleanliness and sanitary science and hospital service. And the emphasis is worthy, and the gospel is the very gospel of the Son of God, but not all of it. And when we are dainty in our distribution of pity and select the objects of it, and say we believe in hospitals and soup kitchens and organized relief work, but not in missions, we may be good nurses, almoners, philanthropists, in a limited sense, but not devoted disciples of the suffering Christ who shed His blood for the remission of sins. God's notice of the needs of Macedonia was a notice of its spiritual need. Spiritual light and power were the helps needed. The suppliant is a country with a splendid literature, making it the crown jewel of the intellectual world; its philosophy gave it a permanent place among the leaders of human thought; its art made cultured Athens a very treasury of beauty; but with all its wealth of learning and grace, it was profoundly needy. "Come and help us," was the cry of needy Europe, where skepticism in regard to all truth was the melancholy outcome of centuries of reasoning, where unspeakable corruption went unchecked by powerless religions, where a dignified calmness toward all pleasure and all pain marked the loftiest type of

moral life. God knew the need and heard its cry, and sent the gospel of His Son.

Has God changed? Has human need changed? The heart of the Eternal which then surely was "most wonderfully kind," has it grown callous in the lapse of the ages? Or, the souls which He has made, related to Him, are their needs other than they then were? True, we are confronted by religions more profound, more mighty in their sway, than any which Paul knew of, and they have in them rich, moral truth. What then? Substitute the subtleties of Buddhism for the beautiful speculations of Greek philosophy; put the Koran with its moralizings, and the Vedas, with their religious history and spiritual suggestions, in place of Aristotle and Zeno; put the tender humanities of Confucianism in place of the high moralities of Stoicism. Are the needs of the human soul perfectly met in these provisions of Modern Asia as they were not met in Ancient Europe? Is there no darkness or pain in the hearts of these modern millions, appealing to God and moving Him? Surely, yes. A needy world still clamors for His help; still He listens and answers; and still His answer is in the gospel of His Son, the gospel of His love to man, the gospel of His suffering, atoning, welcoming, cleansing

love. This is His answer. Not new Western philosophies, not modern civilizations, not religious creeds, not Church liturgies nor Church governments, but the sweet gospel of the blessed Christ. It was a message sent through Paul. The gospel must be offered by a heart which knows its meaning and power. It was the method for God's revelation of Himself to ancient Israel; the passionate, spiritual life of His servants was the vehicle for song and prophecy. It is the method of the incarnation. The Son of man brought the glorious truth of "God manifest in the flesh." It is the method of the advancing Kingdom. God's truth is to be personalized. His power is to be carried in devoted lives. We need not ask why God can not speak His truth and give His power immediately to every soul. Sufficient for us to know that this is not the prevailing method with Him. His messages are to be carried by messengers. Exceptions only establish the law. We need not speculate about reasons for the method. It is God's choice, and His choices are based in wise love.

2. *God's fellowship with need.* Notice that the voice of need is the voice *of* God. That need is an appeal *to* God, we easily believe. His tenderness guarantees His notice; but here is another attitude

of His love, and a new emphasis upon its measure. Paul hears the Macedonian cry for help and he and his companion conclude that they have been listening to the voice of God. They have not only grasped the idea that the needy Macedonian has spoken *to* God, but that he has spoken *for* God. He is somehow God's representative—not only a suppliant for God's bounty, but a messenger to speak God's will. And these heralds of the cross, loosing from Troas and crossing the Ægean, are showing loyal obedience as well as responsive sympathy. We need to learn that truth more thoroughly. God has identified Himself with human need. Surely the life of the Man of Sorrows teaches us that. It is what He bids us recognize in His picture of the judgment. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." This is love overpowering! Every craving for food in feeble, famishing bodies is a continuance of His wilderness fasting; every prison bar of every pining captive a counterpart of the fetters of the savage soldiery in the governor's palace; every shooting pain of every diseased frame an addition to the agony of the crashing nails and piercing thorns on the cross. "Ye did it unto Me." What a marvelous statement of fellowship! The

condemnation of the miserable victims of selfishness was in the fact that they had not listened to the pleading of the hungry, suffering Christ.

Now, this is the lesson: The Macedonian need is God's cry. The response to the need is obedience to Him. The failure to respond is rebellion. The need of heathenism is the call of God. To formulate reasons for carrying the gospel across the seas to the dark places beyond, other than the reason of loving obedience, is impertinent. To withhold money or men for economical reasons; to draw discouraging contrasts between one missionary and seventy thousand gallons of rum; unduly to emphasize the value of the truths of race religions,—these may be coverings for our treason. And every failure to respond is sad enough commentary on our own spiritual state. We are dull of vision, and can not see the suffering Christ in the godless millions; we are dull of hearing, by reason of the pleasing, everlasting murmur of our own selfishness, and can not hear the call of God in the needs of suffering man. God calls us. Reason enough for our going to every needy soul. It is well enough to show that missions are an investment and not a waste; well enough to prove that missionaries are to be reckoned among the world's statesmen, help-

ing to solve political problems; that they are helpers of science, contributors to literature, and benefactors to commerce. It is all true enough. But these are justifications offered to an un-Christian world; vindications of the ways of God to unbelieving men; confirmations of our faith in the presence and power of God, but not reasons for our action. No new motive from the growing civilization and developing commerce of a heathen land ought to be needed by any true disciple of Jesus Christ. His wish is our law; and this is true even though we may not be in close enough harmony with Him to give perfect, innermost response to the wish, for His wish holds all the wisdom and all the love which we lack, and obedience to His wish, without waiting for any indorsement of its wisdom by our consciousness, becomes a tribute to our own completed selves. If we do not answer God's own commandment, without searching about for buttressing facts to make the commandment reasonable to us, we are rebels. Paul heard God's call to him from across the waters, and he went.

And in another way we may regard this appeal as the voice of God. Even while in general we may find in Macedonia, and the Europe to which it was the gateway, a profound apathy and content-

ment with things material and transient, yet the call may well represent the misunderstood aspirations of these millions. The race which had produced such colossal spirits as Plato, the moral life which later burst into such splendid bloom in Epictetus, how shall we account for the discoveries of those brave thinkers and the lives of those heathen saints? Are they the triumphs of an unhelped humanity? We can not think it. In the intellectual struggles and spiritual visions of those pre-Christian apostles of truth and goodness is there no stimulus of the ever-present God? Surely, yes. God had not left himself without witness, nor without witnesses. Every treasure of truth was His gift, and every triumph of character He molded with His invisible fingers. And so the very aspirations, imperfectly read, suggested by this call of the people, were the product of the present loving God. And to-day, is not the same thing true? When we leave the notice of the dense, pagan darkness to be found in many a benighted island and ignorant district, or the study of the cruel practices and debasing superstitions which curse myriads of our fellow mortals, and consider the keen aspirations of Japan which have changed its intolerance for anything Western into a welcome for the teaching of com-

plete Christian truth; consider the subtle intuition of the theistic Hindu; the remarkable intensity of belief in the presence and speech of the Holy Spirit in the soul, to be found in the members of the Brahma Somaj; or leaving these instances of religious fervor and ecstatic devotion which may be seen in these champions of eclectic religions, if we look at the ignorant devotee, who looking forward wearily to the almost endless transmigration of his soul, yet longs to bring nearer the time of his perfection, and goes through severe discipline, austerities as cruel as any of those practiced by misguided pillared saints of early Christianity, or the Flagellants of the Middle Ages, are we not feeling in these blind gropings or splendid aspirations of modern heathenism the moving of God in the souls He has made? O, surely. And to us is given the supremely blessed work of giving answer to the God-created cravings of these dimly-lighted souls, the answer which has brought us peace and joy in the acceptance of His perfect revelation in Christ.

II. PAUL'S VOCATION AS GOD'S AMBASSADOR.

1. *A leader.* From Asia to Europe! Universal conquest is in the apostle's thought. The astonishing boldness of the Lord is repeated in His messen-

ger. That boldness has an important place in the missionary, is a necessary quality in missionary temper, a necessary element in a missionary's equipment for battle. If he relaxes in jot or tittle his claim that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof;" if he weakens in his expectation to wrest this great heritage from the grasp of usurping powers and present it to his King, then his strength is gone and his toil becomes hesitating, vacillating. One of the astonishing things in Christ's teaching is this daring universality in His claim. His kingdom so small, seedlike in its beginnings, is to become as a great tree. He sees the nations gather before Him, Himself their divider and judge. If we consider His human estate, such a claim is amazing. He had no swords to enforce it, nor social nor political standing to support it. And our conclusion might be "an inspired conception indeed, but after all a daring dream." But the claim is not to be studied, has not been studied in the dim light of discouraging conditions, but in the radiance of His own glorious, triumphant life. It is the perception of what He was, not of what the world was, that makes reasonable the hope and vision of a universal kingdom. His world-embracing claims are not the speech of frenzied thought, but the

natural expression of conscious power. Now, just this spirit is shared by this great missionary apostle. He will brave any danger, assail the false worships of heathenism, enter the realms where the mightiest philosophies have held sway, storm haughty Rome itself, never ashamed, never resting, because persuaded that he is journeying through the dominions of his King. This still is to be the spirit of the missionary toiler. How can he be supported, save by his Lord's vision of a regenerated earth? Judson had this prophetic gaze, when, standing alone, he looked upon the temples of a Burmese city, and exclaimed: "We stand upon the dividing line of the empires of darkness and light. O, shade of Ah-ran-han, weep over thy falling fanes; retire from the scenes of thy past greatness. A voice mightier than mine, a still small voice, will ere long sweep away every trace of thy dominion."

There are certain elements in this temper, with its purpose of universal triumph, which should be noted. It is exclusive, uncompromising, aggressive. To one who did not consider the force and future of the truth of which Paul was the herald, there might be something ludicrous in this vision at Troas. He might be rated as an extreme egotist, whose vision was the child of his own conceit.

Going over to help Europe! Making his first assault upon Greece, mother and home of the learning in which he himself had been trained, patron of beauty, creator of science, earnest student of religious truth! A modest deference to philosophical opinion might seem a more fitting temper for this traveling Jewish teacher. And yet, while Paul acknowledges the truth taught by their poets, and finds their philosophic formulas useful as servants of the highest truth, he goes not to share the credit of relief with other agencies, which had already failed, but as the messenger of the only Savior. The truth as it is in Jesus, not as it is in Plato, or Aristotle, mastered him and seemed of supreme value. An exclusive temper goes along with his broad vision; a loyalty to Christ, which allows no equal place to other masters. Such a spirit-awakened opposition, of necessity. There was no chance for compromise, and so there must be conflict. Persecution must come to a religion which flatly denies the right of local race religions to control human life. And persecution did come. And Paul and all the martyrs who with him and after him died for the truth, scorned life which was to be gained by any smallest sacrifice of their faith, involved in conformity to popular custom or belief.

This is the truth which we are to hold with all sturdiness. Christianity is absolute. It is not an associate religion; it is supreme. It is not temporary; it is final. Such a theory came into violent collision with the Roman policy of co-ordinating all religions, and is in just as positive conflict with the notion of all modern religionists who build a pantheon in their thought, and give Christianity simply a share of the reverence which they impartially distribute to all the religions of the earth. With an open eye for all truth, however stated, and an open heart for every truth seeker or truth lover of any race or belief, there still must be the steady, unwavering allegiance to Jesus as the truth of truth and Lord of life. If we consider the religion of our love just a step toward ultimate truth, a contributing factor toward the religion that is to be, then our missionary endeavors will be comparatively nerveless; but if in Jesus we do actually find a revelation of the Father, and in His mastery of the soul the final blessing of the soul, then we shall never be turned from our aggressive work by the discovery of the partial truths of other religions. Christianity admits any servant to its fellowship, but is intolerant of any associate, aggressive by its

very genius, confident that it will destroy all error and win the world to God.

2. *A builder.* Paul sails away from the shores of Asia with a precious freight of truth and power. But his departure is not because he has already conquered the regions of his previous toil. Asia was not yet won for Christ. And not because the need of waiting Europe was any more desperate than the need of Asia. Bithynia, where Paul had tried to go, was probably as needy as Macedonia, and "the Spirit suffered him not." Not surely because the Bithynians had no claim upon God. One can not, of course, speak with authority on the reasons of God's choice of Europe. It may be that the element of readiness entered into the solution of the problem; perhaps the Macedonian in the vision *did* represent the restless cravings of his countrymen; perhaps there was a conscious though mysterious hunger disturbing the European millions, and because of this a peculiar readiness, a prepared soil, a susceptibility which promised gracious harvests. But beyond this suggestion, may we not find strategic reasons? When we read this journey from Troas to Neapolis in the light of history, how momentous it seems! Europe and the gospel! How

they have been wedded during all the centuries! How the colonization and evangelization of the earth have been affected by this missionary journey of the great apostle! It is the move of a statesman. His campaigns in the great centers of population, his burning wish to go to Rome also, are not these the instincts of a wise master-builder, building for the ages? And the same wisdom has appeared in the whole history of missions. The mission of Ulfilas, the Moses of the Goths, his Bible translation into a barbarous language, was it not the labor of a prophet, was not his missionary work pregnant with political issues? Take the centralization of ecclesiastical power at Rome, the solid establishment of our religion at the very heart of the empire, what a bearing it had on the future of Europe! The Church staggered under the shock of the invading barbaric hordes, and then rallied and girded herself for the conquest of those northern conquerors, leavening with the truth of Christ this new life which was to rule the world! How full of a far-seeing wisdom it all was! The mission of Augustine to England, under the direction of the diplomatic Gregory, what a master stroke that was! And Boniface, England's gift to Germany, what a genius! How the secular power of the great

Frankish conquerors was made effective by his religious system! The missionaries of the cross have been wise, statesman-like in plan and method. The principle is illustrated in modern missions. The amazing interest in India, the massing of forces in that great country, there is in it something more than absorbing interest in an interesting people. It is the preparation for a tremendous assault on the very citadel of heathendom, the mightiest champion of its intellectual power. This possible strategic temper of Paul, and perhaps of God, which has been seen in missionary history, may well be an element in our missionary purpose and work always. There are those who insist that we are called always where the need is greatest. The only rule by which the place of labor can be chosen is this rule of the greatest need. Now, the need of the countries may be accepted as the chief reason for our journeys, but not the only reason. Missionary toil is to have the future in view. It is a long process. It is not true that the evangelization of the world, in the sense of preaching the gospel to all nations, will be the carrying out of the purpose of the Master. He said: "Make disciples of all nations," not merely sound God's message in the ears of the nations, but save them, make them in

truth the loyal disciples of the Son of God. That will take time, and it is not only legitimate, but necessary, to plan our work so that the actual salvation of the whole world may be furthered. And so while there are multitudes in Africa and the islands of the sea more degraded than our own countrymen, there must still be a patient, persistent toil for the redemption of this great land, destined, as we believe, to wield a mighty influence on the world's future. The Church of Christ is strong enough to-day to act from all reasons; to toil for the faraway needy, unimportant islands and tribes, and move with tremendous energy and wise generosity for the saving of the great and influential empires of the East.

3. *A servant.* The service rendered was leading men to his Master. He demanded exclusive homage for his King, because only in such homage could needy souls be helped. A helper he is by the very terms of his call. "Come and help us." He possesses that which would help, and so is compelled by its very possession to share it with others. He said he was debtor to the Greeks, and is now eager for the opportunity to pay his debt. The principle which explains the indebtedness is not commercial; he goes to the Greeks as a helper, not merely be-

cause the Greeks had helped him, for in his acknowledgment of debt he coupled the barbarian with the Greek, the foolish who had taught him nothing with the wise who had taught him much. Not because he has been a receiver from Europe does he go as a giver. It is not a process of trade. We are not to limit our endeavors to those who have benefited us. Greece had helped Paul intellectually, Rome had helped him politically, Jerusalem had helped him religiously, yet he is just as ready to serve the fierce Scythian and roaming Arabian, who were not to be numbered among his benefactors. The principle of the indebtedness was benevolent. His love, his possession of the salvation of God, made every needy soul on earth his creditor. The blinding vision of the ascended Son of God, the revelation of that Son in him, the understanding of the Divine mystery of the ages—Christ in the soul its hope of glory, these were sacred treasures which he owed to every soul which had them not. The principle is not changed. Our possession of the power to help the nations puts upon us the obligation to do it. The Church of Christ niggardly in the use of her resources is dishonest. She is not her own. The steward who has charge of large treasures of money or brains, and

doles out these forces which are designed for free circulation, is robbing the world. We do not yet realize the responsibility which weighs upon us. Our debts do not disturb us. The clamor of our creditor—the whole unsaved world—in our ears hardly ruffles our peace. We do not chafe under our liabilities as Paul did. Our Christ is the Son of man. We who love Him have no controlling interest in Him. He belongs to all men. And upon us rests the duty of putting the world in possession of its own. Woe to us if we fail in our trust! In one of Retzch's illustrations of "Faust," demons are contending for the soul of the philosopher. The angels above are watching the struggle, and throw roses from the bowers of Paradise at the demons. In the sulphurous atmosphere of the pit the roses change to burning coals which scorch and blister. So may God's blessings curse us if we attempt to keep them in the fierce atmosphere of selfishness!

VIII.

THE INNER LIFE.

"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."—Prov. xxiii, 7.

This is part of a warning, not to trust the apparent generosity of a selfish man. If his invitation to partake of his dainties appears cordial, his cordiality is assumed and miserly greed really grudges each mouthful. It brings the important lesson that the outward appearance is not always an infallible index to character. It directs us in our search for human values to the innermost man. The sentence is not a recommendation of egotism. It does not teach that as a man thinketh about himself, "so is he." It is not an assurance that one's estimate of self is certainly correct. This is not true. One's estimate of self may be too large, or too small, according as vanity or humility holds the measure. But it teaches that the deepest life is the real life. The life moves by the flow of its deepest current.

Its secret things determine its kind. The general direction of its hidden thoughts, wishes, plans, determines its goal.

I. THE HEART LIFE IS THE REAL LIFE.

It is this real life that is closely concerned with God. He deals with verities. In this veritable life of the heart He is honored or dishonored. In this His presence brings terror or joy. As God sees us, so we are. "What thou art in the sight of God, that thou truly art," said good old Thomas à Kempis. The masks that men make may effectually cover the features of the soul from their fellows, but not from God. The accidents of form or wealth or power may lead human judgments far astray, but God is light, and these interposed screens no more hide the lurid gleams of selfishness and passion from His gaze, and no more prevent the entrance of His bright, searching knowledge, than the clearest crystal intercepts the light of day. We may find here:

1. *A lesson in charity.* Final knowledge is with God. Since our knowledge of the hearts all about us is imperfect, our measurements of those hearts can not be exact. God knows the total life of the heart. We emphasize for our own justification in

our stern judgments the Master's principle, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and the principle is true. But we must study the total fruitage. If I stand beneath an apple-tree and pick up a gnarled specimen of its fruit, that scraggy apple is not necessarily a statement of the prevailing quality of the tree's crop; that particular apple may have been damaged by some external hostile force, some worm, or frost, or stone, while the rest of the fruit may be fair and luscious. And so also in life. We have false standards by which we decide what conduct should be. Actions which are contrary to our opinion of Christian propriety, are wrong. We constitute ourselves censors and dictators. We give no credit for honesty and purity of purpose, when deeds violate our standards. We have stern frowns for pleasures which we condemn, but no smiles for gentle, thoughtful kindness, which in our eager emphasis of defects we have hardly inclination to notice. But it is by this unobtrusive, almost unconscious sweetness of the outer life that the heart-life is most surely revealed. We display our own heart-life in estimating the heart-life of others. "The good that a man sees compared to the evil is as his own good compared to his own evil." That might almost be accepted as a law, if we make it mean habitual sight.

If a man is an adept in discovering the evil in his fellows, his very proficiency at least powerfully suggests too great internal familiarity with such evil. On the other hand, if the bulk of a man's moral substance is good, he will have a controlling affinity for goodness, and be powerfully attracted by the virtues of his brothers. "A man seeks himself in his associates." If his life is impregnably settled in sincerity of purpose, made bright and beautiful by love, then charity will lead the forces of his soul whenever he sets out to investigate other lives. To leave souls with God, who only can perfectly know them, is a necessary course. To establish other tests is impertinent. To demand subscription to creed as a condition of entrance to visible fellowship with those who are known by the name of God's Son, is to assume a right which we have not. To inquire into the spiritual life of those who timidly knock at our ecclesiastical doors, and tenderly foster that life, this is the only oversight and supervision which we have any right to exercise.

2. *A demand for spirituality.* The life of the world is controlled by a practical materialism. We use the word "practical" as opposed to "theoretical." However much worldlings are disposed to admit the existence of the spiritual, they nevertheless prac-

tically ignore it and surrender themselves to the dominion of the material. Look at our commercial and political activities. Wealth and place are the prizes toward which the crowding, pushing, fighting multitudes are eagerly moving. Those who fall from weariness or wounds in this disorderly mob, for the mass has none of the orderliness of an army, are pitied for a moment and then forgotten. Those who succeed are admired and applauded, and eagerly questioned for the secret of their success. The world is like a great market-place. The loftiest forces of the human soul are often measured by their market values. Genius is bought and sold. Thinkers who can grapple with eternal principles, artistic geniuses who can see the invisible and give enduring form to loftiest ideals, must consult the popular taste in their productions; they must think more of the money value or practical utility of their work than of its eternal truth. If they refuse, then the world votes them into the darkness of obscurity. The outward, the visible, the material, these mostly win the world's attention. Not wholly; there are noble souls who live above such turmoil, who are not "of the earth, earthy." But mostly a man is rated according to his money, or according to his intellectual brilliancy, rather than according to his moral weight,

or his real mental power. Now, in the midst of this idolatry of the material, the merely outward, we enter a plea for the cultivation of a profound spiritual heart-life. This is not the recommendation of an impracticable life; not an invitation into a vaporous rhapsody of life, not a withdrawal from the practical concerns of life, an entrance into a dreamy existence which spends itself in gazing wistfully and hopefully into a distant future. Not this. The day for such piety has gone by. To curse the body and cruelly maltreat it, in the fancy that pain is a tonic for the soul and pleasure its poison, is no longer regarded as evidence of saintliness. To imprison one's self within grim walls and there chain the life to wearisome vigils and devotional observances, can no longer be accepted as a sample of the loftiest religion. Religion must care for the body, which is such a real factor in the life of humanity; must give close attention and worthy emphasis to the life which now is. And just this is one of the notable features of the Christian life of our day. The Church is more and more emphasizing the need of practical ministries; is coming to recognize that clothing and food for the shivering, starving poor are as certainly among the designed gifts of God as forgiveness and peace and faith. She has adapted her ministries to the needs of the lives which have been

made narrow and hard and bitter by poverty and scorn. She is getting rid of the false dignity, which has so often made her fancy that splendid temples, and dim religious light, and solemn ritual, and strictly orderly methods are always necessary to religious devotion. She is pushing her way into the hovels of the poor and making them feel, by her practical, tangible sympathy and help, that her long-professed love for all the weary, oppressed brothers of her Master is a real thing. She is grappling with the social problem; studying the social unrest; looking with suspicion on the present social order, which makes possible the accumulation of vast, unearned, unused wealth by a few, while whole armies of their fellow-mortals, entitled to at least some share in the bounties of the good God, are fighting out their miserable existence in the filth of our cities' slums. She is burning with indignation over the monstrous oppressions of the worshipers of gold who crowd their enslaved victims into a joyless, despairing existence, into cruel diseases and premature death, by their extortions of poorly-paid toil. Thank God for the growing sensitiveness on the part of His Church to the present, pressing, earthly needs of man. But the Church in all this is not teaching that the body and its needs must be given supreme homage; on the contrary, she insists that the final cure for the

social disorder and distress is to be found in regenerated hearts. And along with her wisely, practical ministries is the glad, reverent, spiritual life, which is fed and enriched by these practical ministries. Indeed, this is the other notable feature in the present attitude of the Church,—the emphasis she is putting on the spiritual life, the demand for the conscious life of God in the soul. There is a growing insistence on the comparative unimportance of intellectual creeds, and the supreme importance of Christlike character. A spiritual life we plead for. We do not mean a life which finds its sole expression in the exercises of established Church order. Not that which has psalms and hymns and public prayer and public speech for the chief proofs of its existence. But the life that abides in truth—truth in the inward parts, truth which makes it impossible that one should even suspect that the outward, visible life is a deceiving mask, wearing a semblance of truth, but really covering the lie of the heart; the life which is warm with love and gains its vision of the life of a brother through the lens of sweet charity; the life which is gentle and tender and ready in sympathy; the life which is patient and long-suffering and forgiving; the life which is fragrant with humility and strong with faith; the life which is

all full of the consciousness of God's presence, which burns with love for Him, is promptly obedient to Him, is thrilled with a solemn joy when the knowledge comes that he is pleased; the pure, true, sacrificing Christ life,—such a life is the evidence that the tabernacle of God is with man. A spiritual character is sufficient answer to the demand for the supernatural which is in the human heart. Men are too prone to think that signs and wonders, material miracles, are the only worthy proofs of the presence of God. There is with many an abnormal appetite for the so-called miraculous, as was true in Christ's time. There are people who will find in moving tables and spirit-rapping and supposed ghostly voices and bodily healings, more evidence of the presence and power of God, than in the truth and purity and love of divine lives. But spirituality is the true supernatural; a holy life is to be demanded as the proof of the worth of all systems of jugglery and imposing metaphysical abstractions, which make bids for men's allegiance.

II. THE HEART LIFE SHOULD BE THE VISIBLE LIFE.

We are not herein saying that the heart's vices should be made known. We are assuming that a vicious heart is not a natural heart; that sin is not

necessary to a soul; that the deepest longings of humanity are for God; and then claiming that this deep-lying spring of spiritual life, which bubbles up in men's moral consciousness and struggles Godward, be released from all its fetters, and allowed to flow into all the movements of the life. We are to be true to the deepest in us; to be willing, and not ashamed, to show forth our real selves; to cease to be imitators of those whose individuality is a marked thing, and simply be obedient to the voice of God in us; cease to be slaves to public opinion, and just acknowledge the authority of the soul. These are our duties and we shirk them. Can we not believe that God has a special design for each immortal, or must we believe that we are all samples of one unvarying type? We can not be content with a monotonous uniformity of life in all its possessors. Christianity deals with the individual, and has a special mission to the individual. Buddhism sees in the extinction of the individual and his absorption into the universal soul the final heaven of the race, and in a trancelike state, in which all consciousness is lost, the very highest bliss of present life. But the gospel of God's Son searches for the individual, not to destroy his individuality, but to consecrate and exalt it. God wants to develop our

best, our truest selves. Why not let Him? Why not give free expression to the heart-life in which God is? Conventionality, propriety, dignity, are our jailers. In our fidelity to custom we are often traitors to self. Why should not our faces, our entire visible lives, speak the truth? Why not have them utter the rich life of the soul? It has been said that faces never lie; that the soul always compels the service of the face as a reporter. But this hardly agrees with facts. It is true, indeed, that in some glance of the eye, touch of the hand, word of the lips, the soul may reveal itself, but the revelation is a momentary thing, an unintentional thing, made possible when the imprisoning will is off guard. Why not have it a constant thing? There is a good deal of successful hypocrisy. The costumer's is not the only place where false faces are found. If the heart-life is the warm, pure, spiritual life for which God pleads and toils, why should it be repressed? It is, constantly. Self-denial has its place, but its limits, too. It is to be used in the conquest of moral foes, not in the repression of moral life. Yet the repression of the very best in us is common enough. If the heart is full of song, why should not the face be full of gladness, with shining eyes and smiling lips and loving voice, instead of having a carefully

regulated, conventional smile, and a face swept carefully clean of every trace of soul? If the heart is full of loving sympathy for suffering, why should the tear be kept back, and some lifeless platitude be given the work of conveying to the needy one the knowledge of the sympathy? If the heart burns with indignation over the villainies which oppress our brethren, why should not the thunders roll from our lips, regardless of motives of selfish policy? And if the soul is made rich with some sweet experience of God's love, why should the lips be sealed, miser-fashion, so that no needy one can share in our treasure? O, that all the children of God may have a profound, spiritual heart-life, which shall be allowed to express itself through every mode of utterance presented!

III. THE HEART-LIFE WILL BE THE ULTIMATE LIFE, AND WILL DETERMINE DESTINY.

Even among men this is true. Emerson well says, "The world is full of judgment-days, and into every assembly that a man enters, in every action he attempts, he is gauged and stamped." And that force in man, by which he is measured and assigned his rank by his fellows, is his heart-force, that which is his essential self. One's admiration may be given

to ability, but one's devotion is given only to character. This may not be true among the devotees of the world, whose accepted standards of manhood are all false, who profess to deal only with the glitter of human life and not with its gold, but true souls everywhere invariably detect the presence of soul in another, and are drawn to it as certainly as the heavenly bodies attract each other, and are drawn in proportion to the measure of the soul that draws near. And even of the superficial ones it is true that, while their vote is given for that which seems, their conviction is for that which is; while their public allegiance is given to the outer life, their trust goes to the heart-life. In the biography of Professor Austin Phelps is the record of his wish that his reputation among his fellows rest on the work of his heart rather than the work of his head. And this must be, for the work of the head, which endures, is the work into which the soul has gone. The heroes whom the world lets live in its history and its love, are those toilers with voice, or pen, or sword, or brush, or chisel, in whose work soul is throbbing. And what is true of man is a suggestion of what must be true of God. Is it not significant that in the picture of the judgment given by Christ, those who are welcomed into the joy of the

King were those whose life-service had been such an inevitable expression of their deepest lives that they were not conscious of their own goodness? "Lord, when saw we Thee hungry or athirst, or sick, or in prison, and ministered unto Thee?" And those were rejected who fancied that some special occasion was necessary in order to display love to God; and did not know that in their own confession that service was not their habit, their condemnation was written. It was the true, pure, helping heart-life that was welcomed into the joy of God.

May we be wise in making pure, dominant and visible the heart-life which at last must bear the scrutiny and judgment of the King when all its earthly homes and trappings are destroyed!

IX.

TRUTH THROUGH CONSECRATION.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."—Rom. xii, 1, 2.

THIS phrase marks the dividing-line of the epistle, the division between the doctrinal and the practical. That which follows, however, is not to be regarded as a string of practical precepts added to a discussion, but having no special relation to it; but is to be regarded as the logical outcome of the argument—the vital end toward which the argument was tending. All doctrine is practical if we attend to its issues. All duty has truth at its root. The Word of God has always this characteristic. Its

profound truth is to issue in lofty life. It has no speculations which are intended to provide intellectual exercise. Its revelations are in order to sanctification.

Some one has said, "Dig deep enough in the Bible, and you will find this, 'Do right,'" to which has been added, "Dig still deeper, and you will find some revelation of God's holy will." Paul has been setting forth in masterly fashion God's plan for man's salvation, and now proceeds to show its practical bearing on man's life in Church and State. These two verses introduce these practical obligations.

I. THE BASIS OF THE APPEAL.

"By the mercies of God." If we give that a general meaning, what a powerful motive is supplied! The mercies are innumerable. It would not take us long to read our entire life-history. And if we go back to its beginnings, we can not fail to find God as its Author. And not only for the origin of life, but for the support of it, we are indebted to His mercy. This we do not always plainly see. Take an illustration. Our civilization is a complex thing. There are many agencies at work in it. Many forces have produced it. There have been new adaptations

of great forces, which not long back were unknown, save in their destructive outbreaks. And these adaptations add to our comfort and convenience. But whatever the possible mechanical combinations of iron, and whatever the mighty energy of steam, and whatever the carrying power of copper wire, and the mysterious might of the electric fluid, we do not dream that iron and steam and wire and electricity will work of themselves. Back of and present in all our scientific equipment in industrial realms, we must have the mind of man. Likewise we have many agencies, natural and human, at work untiringly to provide life's sustenance. They bring us food and raiment, and houses to shelter us, and truth to enlighten us, and burdens to call to us, and problems to vex and develop us. But if we say these materials and powers which serve us are merely natural or human, we are superficial. Go deeper. Back of nature's forces and of man's brains is God. And neither nature nor man would move without Him. "The mercies of God" is a phrase which is equivalent to everything worthy in life.

But the mercies here emphasized are spiritual. The word "therefore" has a backward look. Paul has in mind the redemptive mercies. The loving purpose of God, the cross, the resurrection, the

quickening spirit. How we need to emphasize the reality of these chief facts of our faith! Dr. Robinson Nicoll refers recently to the action of the Protestant Synod in France at their meeting in 1872. It was the first meeting of the Synod for more than two hundred years. The court had during that time been silenced by the power of the State. But after the fall of the empire and the rise of the republic, permission was obtained to reconvene the Synod, for the purpose of determining the limits of Church membership. The question before it was, "What is the Christian religion, who are entitled to call themselves members of the Christian Church?" Guizot, historian and philosopher, said, "As for me, I am a Christian. I know what my symbol is. There are men sitting by me," said he, "who do not accept the Christian religion. They have a sincere belief in God. I have been careful not to deny that they have a religion. Let them form a deistical Church. I shall be glad of it; but assuredly the difference is great between them and Christians." The champion of the liberals said: "In my eyes, a man is a Christian who, though a sinner, has a joyous confidence in God." He denied that any specific Christian belief was necessary to a Christian religion. The leader of the orthodox party moved that the Synod

adopt as its confession, "Salvation by Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who died for our offenses and rose again for our justification." The difference between his opponent's creed and his own, he described as the difference between two religions. The liberals attempted to show that they did not deny the Christian facts, but interpreted them spiritually. The answer given to this claim was, "When a fact is explained in such a manner as to make it disappear, that process is no longer called taking a spiritual view of it." They really vaporized the facts instead of spiritualizing them. We need now, as then, an emphasis on these fundamental facts, which Paul regards as the supreme mercies of God. The crucified and risen Son of God, the given Spirit of God. This is Paul's appeal, "I beseech you, brethren, by these mercies, to present your bodies."

How little souls feel the obligations of the cross! Bishop Foss has been quoted as saying in a sermon, "I look forward with joy to the time when in the long procession of the redeemed I at last stand before Jesus Christ and thank Him for having died for me." And that is a prospect which may well bring a glow to every loyal heart. But how much, here and now, do we feel the obligation of the cross? Paul's feeling here reaches a climax. He has shown

the sinful condition of the Gentile world, the fact that the Jew was involved in equal condemnation with the Gentile, the whole world being shut up in sin, that God might be merciful to all. The new way of faith was after all the old way, which preceded the law. He has declared the peace and freedom and power and comfort which belong to souls who accept the grace of God and yield to the Spirit of God.

And, now, reviewing all these mighty mercies, his soul is warmed to a white-heat of eagerness, and he exclaims: "I beseech you, brethren, by these mercies, to present your bodies."

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE APPEAL.

1. *Dedication.* "Present your bodies." This is very practical. If the apostle had been in agreement with some disciples of the newest thought, he would never have made that appeal. He would have known that there is no such thing as body. We are deluded. The diseases of the body are troublesome fancies. There is only one substance—spirit. Matter is an impertinent phantasm. To be sure, we are obliged to act as though the delusion were true; but that is a temporary necessity, created by ages of mistaken thought upon the matter. Paul, however,

had not reached that point. In his belief, men had actual bodies, which they controlled and which they could present to or withhold from the merciful God. He is not recommending the dedication of a delusion, an unsubstantial nothing. He is moving in the sphere of worship, and is using its old sacrificial forms in his speech. There were offerings for atonement, and offerings after atonement—sin-offerings and thank-offerings. This appeal is for a thank-offering. Atonement has already been wrought out, therefore, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." Let them be holy and worthy and vigorous.

The body for God. Then the soul will be helped to grow, and the life be helped to serve. Browning records the condemnation of a soul who misjudged the place of the body:

> "Thou did'st attest,
> 'T was fitter spirit should subserve
> The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
> Beneath the spirit's play.
>
> Thou said'st,—let spirit star the dome
> Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
> No nook of earth."
>
> "And the sentence was this:
> 'Thou art shut out of the heaven of spirit;
> Glut thy sense upon the world.'"

And many a soul has conceived that the principal function of the spirit is to serve as a star in the

dome of life's sky, so as to illuminate the body in all its journeys and its searches. The same poet suggests the true relation between the two when he says:

"Let us not always say:
'Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'
But as the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, 'All good things are ours,
Nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul!'"

And if the body be given to God, according to Paul's appeal, it *will* help the soul, as the poet conceives its function to be. If the body be His, the soul will be kept from the mistake of the ascetic, who abuses the body, and from the mistake of the sensualist, who indulges it. It must be kept strong and clean, because it is His. He will use the strength of its muscles, the skill of its fingers, the light of its eyes, the music of its voice. Even Christ served through the body. His feet got wearied in the blessed journeys, His hands brought health to those who suffered, His lips spoke words of grace and truth. It was the dear body that was thorn-crowned and nail-pierced, and broken and buried and raised again into life for our salvation.

2. *Transformation.* "Be not fashioned according to this age, but be ye transformed." Notice the

contrast between these two words, "fashioned" and "formed." The old translation gives us in each case the word "formed," but the revision presents the truth of the apostle's thought. "Fashioned" has in it the suggestion of what is fading, but "formed" suggests what is permanent. "Be not fashioned according to this age." Paul's age was marked by debilitating luxury, religious laxity, and inhuman cruelty. The wealthy spent much of their time in feasting. The attitude toward religion was a careless one of mere flippant tolerance, and human life was held in lightest estimation. Souls must not be selfish, or cynical, or religiously flippant. Such was Paul's exhortation to his day. Our age is commercial and scientific, and each of these two phases of our age is dangerous to religious life. The one offers luxury, pleasure; the other offers law, order, scales, crucibles, retorts. Doubtless the ultimate attitude of science toward religious truth is an attitude of uncertainty. To refrain from religious conclusions is consistent and proper conduct on the part of science, since these are matters which lie outside its domain. But too often science has gone from uncertainty to denial. And the influence with which science touches us brings the danger that we shall think lightly of truth which can

not be scientifically established. Darwin yielded to exactly that danger. Said he: "I was very unwilling to give up my belief, but I found it more and more difficult to invent evidence which would suffice to convince me. Thus, disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress." "Be not fashioned" by this spirit of the age. It is a danger which the soul may easily escape. One has said about Paul, that there was something of the mystic about him; that he had a "side door into the unseen," through which he might escape at will. To be sure. Every soul has such a door. Only it will be found a front door if the structure of the life is faced right. And that proper attitude is contemplated in this text. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Such a renewal means a new principle of life, which brings God into the range of vision, and then,

"I but open my eyes—and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul, in the clod."

It might seem that Paul is an advocate of culture as a transforming agency in this phrase, "renewing of your mind." But that would be a super-

ficial decision. We must attend to what precedes and what follows the phrase. Dedication goes before it, and revelation comes after it. And the culture which has its root in dedication, and results in revelation, can not be overemphasized. Paul does not mean that an enlightened mind will bring a transformed life. History, past and current, assures us that transformation does not always follow enlightenment. Some of the best educated men are the worst sinners.

But Paul does mean that a dedicated life, the moral judgment of which is renewed by the Spirit of God, will get transformed. The transformation is a process, not a crisis. The dedication is a crisis; and the transformation is a gradual unfolding of the hidden power of the act of dedication.

III. THE RESULTS OF OBEDIENCE TO THE APPEAL.

"That ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." That ye may discern accurately God's will. The experience which comes to the consecrated is the root of knowledge. We must not say that the only material which enters into our structure of the truth about God comes from experience. This is not so. God's truth is too wide for any soul to hold it. We must pay attention to

the universal, the historic consciousness, the lives of the saints of all the ages. But the root of knowledge is in life. The tree gets its nourishment, not only from the soil in which it is rooted, but widens the reach of its arms and multiplies its whispering leaves and drinks in sunlight and air, but all the time its roots must spread and grasp more soil, and gather into its frame more chemicals from its inorganic home. If it does not, it will be top-heavy. That is the trouble with some of our theologies. They wax fat on speculation, tower into thin air, and have too little rootage in the theologian's life. And that is the trouble with our own knowledge of God. It depends upon custom and tradition and books, and has no roots deep down in the life. And when the frosts of criticism settle upon it, and the axes of scientific argument hack at it, and the winds of disappointment blow upon it, it goes down.

We shall "discern accurately" God and His will when we have been "transformed." Drummond was given new vision by his alliance with God, and as he looked into nature, he declared that nature had been maligned, that in her history and her processes there was more than a selfish "struggle for life." There was also "a struggle for the life of others." He has been criticised for reading Chris-

tian truth into the natural order. Well, why not? Is not the cross of Christ, the meaning of which human souls partially know, the interpreting principle of all the works of God? Is not the "transformed" soul best able to "discern accurately" God's will in the material realm? Augustine knew this "transformed" life, and, looking into the turbulent Roman world with its vexations, its strifes, its wars, its persecutions of what was holiest, he saw also the "City of God," permanent, eternal, not hindered, but helped by the forces which opposed it. Is not the "transformed" soul the best interpreter of history?

And so the message to us is, Get changed and you will see. Only the chosen three saw the Master transfigured. Only to the disciples did He manifest himself after the resurrection. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and he can not know them because they are spiritually discerned, but he that is spiritual discerneth all things."

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